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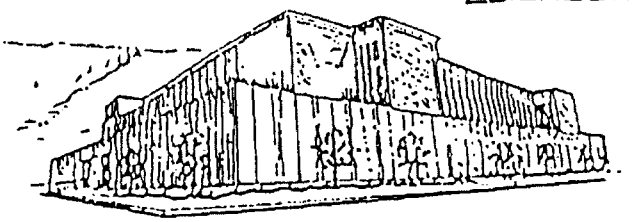
Voices from within : an oral history of women environmental activists in Montana

Elizabeth T. Cleminshaw
The University of Montana

ELIZABETH CLEMINSHAW



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Voices from Within:
An Oral History of Women Environmental Activists in Montana

by

Elizabeth T. Cleminshaw

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Approved by:

Dec Carleton
Chairperson

C C Murray
Dean, Graduate School

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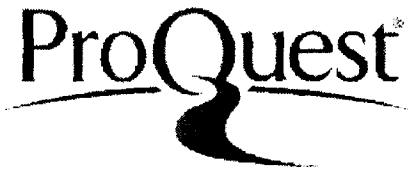
Date



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I. Introduction

Purpose

"While the women of New Jersey are saving the Palisades of the Hudson from utter destruction by men to whose greedy souls Mount Sinai is only a stone quarry, and the women of Colorado are saving the cliff dwellings and pueblo ruins of their state from vandal destruction, the word comes to the women of California that men whose souls are gang-saws are meditating the turning of our world-famous Sequoias into planks and fencing worth so many dollars."[1]

Are these the words of a feminist environmentalist working in a grassroots organization in California? No; in fact, Mrs. Robert Burdette made this proclamation at the first meeting of the California Federation of Women's Clubs in 1897. A common perception exists that women's involvement in the environmental movement began only during the past few decades. On the contrary, women have worked on behalf of the environment for most of this century. Part of this misconception stems from the historic and current lack of recognition afforded women for their work in the environment. But women's individual voices have rarely been heard, and consequently we know little about their experiences within and their perspectives about the environmental movement. Women's truths need to be heard -- not just what they are achieving, but how their work is affecting their lives and if or how they would change things.

This paper is an exploration of what women are experiencing in the environmental movement today through the words of eight female

environmental activists in Montana whom I interviewed individually in early 1994. The interviews gave these women the opportunity to speak about their work in the environmental movement. The point was for these women to be heard.

To place these interviews in context, I will first give a brief history of women in the environmental movement, after which I will describe the method I used to select and interview these women. I will then introduce each woman and give an overall sense of her personal history as it relates to her work in the environmental field. Next, I will discuss the structure of the organizations for which these women have worked as well as each woman's perspective on her organization. I will then discuss the issues each woman highlighted during her interview. Finally, I will address each informant's perspectives on being a woman in environmental activist work.

Women's Historical Involvement in Environmental Activism

Women's roles in the environmental movement have been overlooked by many historians of that topic, who focused on the careers of highly visible public figures such as John Muir and Gifford Pinchot. Indeed, Stephen Fox, in his book The American Conservation Movement, an in-depth look at the history of the movement and its key players, only profiles in detail one woman -- Rosalie Edge -- who challenged the status quo in the Audubon Society.[2]

Although men may have been in highly visible leadership positions in conservation groups, the strength of women behind the scenes was critical to the success of many conservation and preservationist issues. During the progressive movement in the first part of this century (1900-1916), women

were very active in the preservationist movement, even though they worked as volunteers within the constraints of their prescribed gender roles as wives, mothers and homemakers. Women were effective in their work because when they upheld domestic values, the public was more likely to listen to them. Like many white, middle-class women at the turn of the century, they drew upon Victorian ideals of the sanctity of motherhood, home, and family to lend moral authority to their cause.[3] According to environmental historian Carolyn Merchant, women "transformed the crusade from an elite male enterprise into a widely based movement."[4] The effect of women on conservation advances during this time was significant.

Women became passionate about conservation issues because of the horrendous conditions of the cities along with their knowledge of the healing effect of nature. They knew that women needed to join together and act for the environment. During the Progressive Era, the women's club movement was a nation-wide phenomenon. Through these clubs, middle-class women entered public life as volunteer activists, and justified their activism as an extension of domestic ideology. Women from all over the country were effectively working to preserve the natural world. Mrs. Lovell White, the vice president at large of the California Federation of Women's Clubs, worked unceasingly to protect the forests of California. The Calaveras Grove of Big Trees and Big Basin Park are protected as state parks largely because of her efforts.[5]

Although most women in the country could not vote, they used their clout as wives and mothers to affect policy and politics. On a visit to Washington, a group from Minnesota told congressmen: "We represent the State Federation of Women's Clubs, which has a membership of between six and seven thousand and you know that six or seven thousand women

represent six or seven thousand husbands and a few thousand sons who will possibly vote as their fathers vote."[6]

Mrs. Lydia Adams-Williams helped to inform people about the work of women in the conservation era when she wrote an article in 1908 called, "Conservation -- Women's Work." In it, Adams-Williams argued that "'man has been too busy building railroads, constructing ships, engineering great projects, and exploiting vast commercial enterprises' to consider the future. Man the moneymaker had left it to woman the moneysaver to preserve resources."[7]

Scores of women took up Adams-Williams' call to protect the environment. The Women's National Rivers and Harbors Congress began in 1908 with seven members and grew to 30,000 members by 1910, working "to support rivers and harbors bills on waterway development and urged passage of the bill for the preservation of Niagara Falls in the spring of 1909,"[8] as well as educating schoolchildren on conservation. Another women's organization addressing conservation issues was The Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.). In 1910, the D.A.R. became involved in grazing regulation, water power, and coal mining regulation. The chair of the conservation committee, Mrs. James Pinchot, was the mother of Gifford Pinchot, who encouraged their work.[9]

Elsewhere, "women avidly studied the science of trees...and were instrumental in creating state forest reserves in Florida, forming a Department of Forestry in Pennsylvania, and setting aside Mt. Katahdin as a state forest in Maine."[10] The Audubon Society was instrumental in stopping the sale of bird plumage on hats by lobbying as well as joining with other women's conservation groups to encourage women not to buy hats with bird feathers in them.

The largest campaign that the women waged was opposing the construction of a dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite National Park; the dam was to create a water supply for the city of San Francisco. Women's groups openly opposed Gifford Pinchot, a long-time ally who supported the dam. They worked alongside John Muir and other preservationists to protect the valley in a long, drawn out battle that spanned three presidential terms. A city engineer in favor of the dam referred to his opponents as "short haired women and long-haired men,"[11] illustrating the intensity of the battle, and the level at which the men and women fighting to save the valley were attacked. Although the battle for Hetch Hetchy was lost, the nation had become more aware of the environment, and many more women became involved in preservationist groups as a result.

During the 1920's, the impact of women's involvement in the conservation movement lessened. This was due in part to a decrease in government backing, a lessening of support for Gifford Pinchot, and the professionalization of forestry and water-power engineering. Because women did not hold jobs in these professions, they were effectively shut out of much of the subsequent work in the conservation arena. However, they remained active in conservation groups, including the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, and the National Parks Association.[12]

The early involvement of women in conservation made way for women's continued involvement, though sporadic at times, in environmental issues. The 1930's and '40's dampened environmental activism because the country was too deeply affected by the Great Depression and World War II. Rachel Carson's book The Silent Spring, published in the early '60's, jolted the nation into once again thinking hard about the

environment around them. Carson alerted people to the biological destruction and domino effect that could result from pesticide use and pollution. Along with her book came "a new wave of remarkable and dedicated women in conservation."[13]

Environmental historian Sally Ranney described other important women who emerged in conservation work during this time. In California, Margaret Owings worked to protect watersheds that were critical to Redwood National Park. Mardy Murie, wife of wildlife biologist Olaus Murie, was one of the first white women to visit Alaska, and was a key player working for passage of the Wilderness Act and the Alaska Lands Conservation Act. The first citizen organization in Alaska was formed in part by a pilot named Celia Hunter, who helped attract national attention to the state's issues. Katie Lee, an author, singer, river runner and activist, worked steadily to save Glen Canyon from construction of the Glen Canyon Dam. Lady Bird Johnson, who, as first lady, made conservation a personal priority, worked to protect wilderness and biological diversity. Peggy Wayburn, an important activist in the Sierra Club, and the wife of Dr. Edgar Wayburn, one of its leaders, has been active in a range of conservation issues from wilderness to energy policy.[14]

While these women's names may be familiar to some, they are probably less familiar than those of the men involved in the same efforts. There is a continuing perception that few women are leaders or even participants in the environmental movement. This stems in part from the fact that professional conservation positions were defined as masculine occupations, as mentioned above. Furthermore, the lack of women in professional conservation positions resulted in these professions being defined by men, without women's input into the structure or methods of the

organizations. Additionally, the channels through which change often occurs, and with which many environmental organizations work are hierarchical institutions traditionally dominated by men such as political parties, governmental agencies, and banks. The paucity of female role models or mentors also has made it harder for women to enter the system.

There is an element missing in the histories of women environmental activists, and indeed from most histories of the movement: the person. Such histories have been externally focused, looking at the outside, more public areas of women's lives such as what they accomplished within the movement. But it is hard to find personal accounts of individual women's point of view about their experiences. Oral histories can now fill in these gaps.

II. Method

To address this topic, I wanted to talk with women who are working or have recently worked as environmental activists. Primarily because of time and cost considerations, I limited my interviewees to women in Montana. I gathered names of women from people who have worked for several years with or inside of the Montana environmental community. I telephoned each of these women, explained my project, and asked them to complete a brief questionnaire, which gave me biographic information including age, birthplace, marital status, education, and employment history. I included one question about any experiences with sexism at work. Finally, I asked if they would be willing to speak further about their experiences. [See Appendix A] All of the respondents said that they would be willing to speak further.

Using the questionnaires, I selected individuals to interview who represent different attributes of the environmental movement. These included women who primarily volunteered for environmental groups, along with executive directors and an intern. I also included women who are currently working within the environmental community and those who have left for one reason or another. The organizations for which the women work or have worked include wilderness-oriented groups and those more oriented to people and agriculture. The women's ages ranged from 31 to 74. The women also represented a range of social classes, religions, races, and sexual preferences. They grew up in several locations in the United States, including Montana.

I formulated the interview questions to learn how each woman came to be where she is now, to get a sense of her personal experience in each of the organizations for which she has worked, and to get her perspective on the environmental movement as a whole. The main part of the interview centered around how factors such as sexism and relationships affected her feelings of effectiveness as an environmental activist, and how she reacted, both emotionally and actively to incidents of sexism, racism or classism. [See Appendix B for interview questions.] I spoke with each woman twice, except for Louisa Willcox, and Janet Henderson; I was unable to schedule a second interview with either of them. I taped and transcribed each interview.

To augment the interviews, I contacted the organizations for which the women have worked to determine what role women have played within these organizations. I determined the gender make-up of the boards and staffs over the last ten years, as well as what staff and board positions women have held. Along with the mission statement of each organization, I reviewed its newsletter to get an idea of how it conducts business.

Given the size and scope of this project, my intention was to treat the women I interviewed as individuals, and to assume that all of their responses and experiences are valid, none more than another's. I wanted to minimize the patriarchal tendency to generalize from the majority although I did draw some interpretive conclusions. Additionally, some may object to the fact that I interviewed only women to get a view of women's place in the movement. But that is specifically what I set out to do -- to hear what women had to say about the movement.[15]

III. The Women

In this section I will briefly introduce you to each of the women that I interviewed to give you a context for the following sections.

Christine Kaufmann

Several people recommended that I talk to Chris Kaufmann because of her interesting and thoughtful perspectives on the environmental movement. At 43 years old, Chris is a woman who exudes a sense of personal power and is committed to social change. As a graduate of the Environmental Studies (EVST) Masters Program at the University of Montana, she was enthusiastic about my project, but hesitant about the interview, asking to see the questions before committing to talking with me. She currently works for the Montana Human Rights Network, addressing charged issues such as neo-Nazis and hate groups, and therefore is cautious about making public her personal and professional life.[16]

Chris partially credits her Mennonite background for her ethic of helping people. She said that it gave her "a real critical look at our place in the world and that we are not central, meaning human beings. . . and our mission. . . in the world is to serve and take care and make sure that the downtrodden are not trodden down." She and her siblings were also taught that war was not acceptable. While angry at the church for many things, she said that it "[instilled] values in me that cause me to do this kind of work."

Chris grew up lower middle class on a farm in Illinois, "so I felt like I was kind of close to the earth." She also had eleven brothers and sisters and was "never quite sure how that influenced me except that I'm sure that it

did!" Her family often hosted international exchange students in their home, which further expanded their views of the world.

Although Chris could not remember any childhood role models, there are currently individuals "that I admire a lot and want to emulate, and those are people doing political organization work in Montana right now, [such as] Diane Sands [director of Montana Women's Lobby] from Missoula." Chris said, "I think that women have a harder time finding role models. . . . I can think of great women that I sort of look up to, but nobody big pops in mind.

Chris has worked in a variety of jobs, from which she gained a broad perspective and range of skills. She directed a Community Mediation Center; worked with Women's Opportunity Resource Development Center (WORD) in Missoula; Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC); Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences (DHES); and currently works at the Montana Human Rights Network. Chris' work at WORD was her first job after earning her master's degree. Although she feels that the atmosphere at WORD did not tap into her full potential, the work helped her to realize that what she "wanted to do was work in non-profit kind of work, and that it didn't matter a lot if it was in the environmental field to me, but that public interest -- just being on the right side of things -- was what I wanted to do.

Chris then moved into environmental activism, working as a lobbyist for MEIC. She found the political scene "difficult in some ways, and really kind of degrading in others." However, at MEIC, "I felt that people were more seeing what I had to offer." She got along very well with the director, during her two years there, and gained excellent experience.[17] Her environmental work also included work for the Alternative Energy Resource Organization (AERO), where she helped to incubate the Great Northern

Botanicals Association, which researched the potential for viable, ecological cash crops in Montana. She also worked for the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences creating a solid waste plan for the State of Montana. Working for the state did not agree with Chris, primarily because she "didn't like being the reasonable middle of the road." By this time, she knew that she wanted to be the executive director of a non-profit organization, but felt that the leadership positions in the environmental movement were more available to men. Thus, when the current position for director of the Montana Human Rights Network came up, she applied and was hired.

Still, Chris has had a longterm interest in the relationship between environmental and women's issues, and combined the two in her masters work at the University of Montana. She believes that many social and environmental problems are linked and would like to see activists consider diverse issues in their work. When I asked about her experiences with sexism, Chris had difficulty thinking of specific personal experiences that she had had, but spoke passionately about institutional sexism toward women and how the environmental movement has created niches for women that do not necessarily help women's overall status.[18]

Outside of work, Chris puts a lot of emphasis on playing. She only volunteers for other groups in small ways. "I don't feel like I can give a lot to other causes because it's very important to play. . . . It's important for me to try to fit time away from the job. . . . I need restorative time." In fact, a day after our second interview, Chris was leaving for two months to hike the Continental Divide Trail.[19]

Doris Milner

Doris Milner is in a class of her own amongst the women I interviewed. At 74, she is the oldest of these women, and was in her forties when she first became involved in environmental issues. Also, she has served as a volunteer rather than as a paid staffperson for all of her environmental work. Doris is a high-spirited, aggressive but gracious woman who is dedicated to getting things done without thinking about what might get in her way. During the interview, she spoke with energy, and conviction.[20]

Doris' upbringing fostered her appreciation of nature. She was raised on a farm in Maryland, daughter of "proud, excellent German farmers." By the time she was twelve, she "knew every inch of that place, and being outside and learning something about the land, I think you just assimilated it." Doris earned a Master's degree in microbiology and worked as a medical technologist in the Clinical Pathology Lab in New Orleans where she lived for ten years before moving with her family to Montana. She brought her appreciation for nature to Montana: "the out of doors has always been very dear to me, so I think it's just one of those things that came natural, and then this is beautiful country over here, and it belongs to me too! And then I sort of took umbrage when somebody was going to move in and change it."

She became involved in environmental issues when the Forest Service planned to log an area in Idaho where she, her husband and her four children spent much of their time -- the Upper Selway wilderness. "For years we'd take our kids and camp for a week or ten days and then hike and pack and fish and do all those things. And meanwhile the Forest Service had decided that it was going to set up timber sales in that area, and I said, 'nuh uh.'" She spent the next seventeen years working with a small grassroots

group called "Save the Upper Selway", to defend the area from environmental degradation. The group worked with the Forest Service, the Congressional delegation, and other key wilderness advocates to attain their goal. "But we won it!"

Doris remained involved for seventeen years because, she said, "it was a personal thing that got me into it. And in a sense I have found that if you really want to stick to something, you have to feel it deeply because perseverance is what's required." She was also older when she entered into activism, and admits that the maturity and experience she had gained in life were helpful to her. Doris went on to become the first female board president of the Montana Wilderness Association and served in that post for three years.

Doris' involvement with wilderness issues came during the heyday of wilderness preservation. The Bolle report was written outlining the damage that the Forest Service was doing to the forests;[21] Lee Metcalf, Mike Mansfield, and G.M. Brandborg -- names that are practically legends in the wilderness arena -- were people with whom Doris worked regularly.[22] The Wilderness Bill also became law during this time.[23] Her experiences have given her perspective on the wilderness debate in Montana and she is saddened by the split within the wilderness movement today.[24]

Doris is currently active in the local chapter of the League of Women Voters, and has also served as president of that organization. She remains involved on her own in land management and land use planning, including issues on forest service land, and review of the county comprehensive plan. She also likes to garden in her free time.

Janet Ellis

Janet Ellis' organization, the Montana Audubon Council (Montana Audubon), serves as a unified voice for the nine small and geographically dispersed Audubon chapters in Montana. Montana Audubon addresses statewide issues in Helena. Janet, age 38, has worked with Montana Audubon since graduating from the University of Montana in 1980, first as a legislative intern during the legislative sessions, then as the first full-time program director when the organization opened its office in 1989. Janet seems passionate about her work and I sensed that, because of her long history with the organization, she has played an important role in its definition.[25]

Janet developed her interest in the environment partly from her parents who were active in the Nature Conservancy in Ohio. Her father was president of the Ohio Chapter, and she attended board meetings during high school. Majoring in biology in college also helped to foster her environmental interest. Janet has also had a longtime interest in women's issues. "I grew up in a basically upper middle class suburb of Columbus Ohio, I think there were two blacks in our class. . . . I took some kind of sociology class in high school on minorities [and wrote on] the topic of Women as a Social Minority. It created this big stir. . . because it was something the high school kids could relate to. So it's been something I've been aware of and tracked for a while."

During the summers as an undergraduate, and when not working as a legislative intern for Montana Audubon, Janet worked for both the National Park Service and the Montana State Park System.

Janet didn't name any one individual as having been a role model. "I admire different things in different people but I don't know that I had a mentor or anything along those lines." She admires "Jim Jensen [director of

Montana Environmental Information Center] for his ability to work with the press." She said that some professors at the University of Montana helped her learn to tie science and education together, a skill that she uses while lobbying. "Riley McClelland was one of [these professors] that I just loved."

During the interview, Janet was very talkative and forthright and seemed to be an honest, focused and practical woman with a good sense of humor. She has worked in Helena long enough to know the players and the dynamics of the political environment in Montana. She mentioned the difficulties of dealing with the "good old boy" network; "plugging away" was a phrase that she used several times to describe the key to her success. Janet described herself as "a very shy person, or was. I've had to outgrow some of that." She said that as a lobbyist, she is more effective in a one-on-one conversation than testifying in front of a committee or speaking with the press. She credits her knowledge of the facts for her lobbying successes.

Outside of work, Janet spends time with her husband gardening, reading, and renovating a 100-year old house, which takes up much of their time. "I don't volunteer for other organizations. . . I'm aware that I don't have the energy to do that." She has also just had a baby, who will be occupying a good deal of her time and energy.

Janet Henderson

Janet Henderson, 31 years old, is a soft-spoken, introspective woman who seems to be constantly working on life's issues. At the time that I interviewed her, she was in a transitional period -- leaving her job, leaving her house in which she'd lived for several years, and considering moving back to Havre, Montana where she grew up. As a result, she seemed a bit tired and ungrounded. Although she claimed she hadn't recently thought

about her experiences in the environmental movement, Janet obviously had at some time put quite a bit of thought into how those experiences affected her life and her evolution as a person. She was very open about her experiences.[26]

Janet is dedicated to social change and helping people. "When I was a kid I was pretty much a bleeding heart liberal. I just wanted to save the world, I wanted to be a social worker [and] took care of any friends who were being abused." She said she always knew that she wanted to be in human services of some kind, but also had "this deep passion about the land in Montana because I've always really loved growing up here."

Janet worked as a community organizer for Montana People's Action in Missoula after graduating from college in South Carolina. She then worked as an administrative assistant with the National Wildlife Federation before going back to graduate school at the University of Montana for a Masters in the Philosophy of Ecology where she combined her interest in women's issues with that in the environment.

After moving to Missoula after her undergraduate education, Janet volunteered for various grass-roots environmental groups, including the Badger Chapter, Earth First!, and Friends of Lolo Peak, and had a number of experiences with sexism. Part of the problem was that "I was really often like the only woman at meetings or involved in a project." At that time, she was also learning about feminist issues and was keenly aware of sexism when it happened, but her inability to effectively address it was often paralyzing for her.

During and after her graduate work, Janet worked as an administrative assistant at the Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Coalition, a water quality conservation group in Missoula. By this point, she had had enough negative

experiences with environmental groups that she did what the job required of her, but did not involve her spirit or soul in the work. At the same time, she was volunteering at Women's Place, a women's shelter. Janet eventually went to work at Women's Place full-time, where she was able to regain self-confidence that she partially lost during her work with environmental groups. She now feels that she may be ready to tackle the environmental activist world again.

Janet did give environmental causes another chance in the form of the Missoula Greens. She was recruited because of her knowledge of women's and environmental issues and she agreed to join because the Greens claimed to be aware of the link between human and environmental injustices. However, she encountered similar problems as in the other groups with which she had worked -- that the Greens discriminated against women in subtle ways. However, her experience was an improvement over her ordeals with the other grass roots groups. Other women involved had the same awareness of these inconsistencies, so Janet didn't feel as isolated.

When I asked her about role models, Janet said, "the first person that came to mind when you asked that question [was] the heroine of the environmental movement, Rachel Carson. She was like my idol for a while, and I think was really an inspiration to me because she was just so strong, a non-traditional woman who did really amazing things on behalf of the planet, and . . . she had a really good blend [of tradition and non-traditional feminine styles]. She stood out there as a light for me."

Joan Bird

To sit and talk with Joan Bird is to receive an outpouring from the heart. Joan speaks without hiding her emotions -- they in fact increase the

power of what she is saying. Joan has put her heart and soul into learning about and teaching women's empowerment and is very frank about her experiences as a woman in the environmental movement.

Joan, age 45, grew up in Kansas, in a middle class family with very traditional sex roles, "I was told incessantly what I was not capable of doing, not that I was being prohibited from it, but that I was not able to do [it]." A poignant example of this was that she was not allowed to spend the summer working on her grandparents farm because she was a girl, and girls didn't drive tractors and buck hay. The farm was "heaven on earth" for her -- there was no place she would rather spend her time -- and this devastated her.[27]

Joan continuously struggled with the messages that she received growing up. Even while earning her PhD. in zoology, she had doubts about her inherent abilities. When considering a job in graduate school, she thought, "Well, one of the things they have to learn how to do is to to run that tape recorder off of a car battery and I don't know if I could learn how to do that. That might be too hard for me." Joan did, however, receive positive feedback on her academic competency growing up and used this as a cornerstone to build her confidence in areas where she doubted her abilities.

Joan said, "I've always had to push to get to do the things that I wanted to do that were not things that girls were supposed to do." She started a women's crew team and organized a living cooperative at the University of Washington. At University of Montana, she started a women's support group and a women's living cooperative when she realized there were no female professors and not much general support for women in the biology department . She received very little support for her thesis but secured,

without assistance, a project studying birds in Costa Rica and found the funding herself as well.

After graduating, Joan held a series of jobs, some subsistence level, until she found her "dream job" with the Nature Conservancy. There, she would be building bridges among people of different interests to reach a common goal of preserving land. After about five years, however, a new state director was hired whose working and communication styles clashed with Joan's. She encountered gender discrimination in hirings, promotions and in her daily work, and eventually filed a gender discrimination grievance against the Conservancy. When conditions did not improve, she had to leave.

Joan has since been teaching women's empowerment and providing venues for others to do the same. She would still like to use her scientific knowledge to work for the environment, but has not found an area where she feels her work would be both enjoyable and valued. Outside of her work, Joan enjoys "getting outdoors, hiking, spending time with horses, and birdwatching. I love to travel. I spend a lot of time with friends in discussion; reading and being together with other spiritual allies; mothering." She also volunteers for the church and for a battered women's shelter. Her activism includes working for local land use planning, and gay rights.

Joanne Big Crane

Joanne Big Crane, 40 years old, is a woman who questions the status quo, and is working on determining what is right and how to live as an Indian in a white world. She struck me as someone who is very proud, very sure of herself, and yet generous with her spirit. She sticks to her convictions

even though they may cause her political problems at work or with other Indians on the Flathead Reservation where she lives and works.[28]

A self-professed talker, Joanne spoke in-depth about her experiences and perspectives. She was adopted and raised by her maternal grandparents to whom she refers as her parents. They were both born around 1900, and knew much of the traditional Salish ways of life, as well as the history of the reservation. Both of them gathered and used plants for medicinal and spiritual purposes. From her parents, Joanne learned to gather, use, and respect plants, and gained "a general belief in the person's relationship to the land, to the environment, to the animals, and to the plants especially." Joanne uses her knowledge of the plants to make medicines, to continue her education, and to educate others about the cultural uses of plants on the reservation.

Joanne's environmental career began when a friend, knowing of her in-depth knowledge and interest in culturally significant plants, recommended her as an intern on a joint project between the Nature Conservancy and the Reservation. Joanne saw the job as a "godsend," because she was a newly divorced mother of three who was "looking for any opportunity to do something other than bucking bales and posting and poling." During the internship, she conducted field research in various areas on the Flathead Reservation, and worked with the Conservancy on issues including, "protecting special areas, plant habitats, and . . . threatened and endangered plants." The position enabled her to gain a more holistic view of the Reservation, especially in terms of vegetation. Looking at plants from "an ethno-botanical point of view," she began to learn more about botany, ecology, and management, as well as issues that affect the Reservation such as agricultural concerns, grazing, and stocking rates.

Joanne's organizational skills were sharpened while working as a museum curator in Spokane for a traveling exhibit. Her skills and expertise with plants enabled her to become the curator of the herbarium for the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) Division of Lands, where she currently works. She has also been the Indian Nursing Mentor for the Nursing Program at Salish Kootenai College, where she has also taught cultural arts.

Joanne has encountered sexism and racism throughout both her career and her personal life, on and off of the reservation. She feels that she does not get the support she would like from the community on the reservation, possibly because of her somewhat controversial points of view on things.

Joanne said that she does not really separate her work from the rest of her life, because "even when I didn't collect plants as part of my job, I was out there as much as my time could afford." She does a lot of reading about Native American issues, especially those that relate to her interest in plants and culture. She also writes and is involved in art projects, community projects, and cultural projects. Education is a "big concern" to her and she gives presentations on a variety of topics to tribal and non-tribal groups, including cultural sensitivity trainings.

Louisa Willcox

The interview with Louisa Willcox was fast-paced, which is indicative of Louisa's style. Louisa, age 39, is an intense woman with an outspoken, strong-willed personality. I spoke with her in her office at the Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC) -- an office that was buzzing with activity, phonecalls, and people coming and going. Louisa struck me as a person who goes through life without perceiving many barriers. She seems to have a

strong sense of her personal strengths and limits, and how to use them most effectively. She responded easily and quickly to my questions, and included details about the organization when talking about her experiences. Louisa has been with GYC for eight years, and her experiences are intimately tied to the history of the organization.[29]

Louisa grew up on a farm in Pennsylvania. Her connection to the West came when she was fourteen and worked on her uncle's ranch in the Big Timber area. This experience gave her "a feeling for the land." She went to college at Williams College in Massachusetts, and earned her Masters degree in Forest Science at Yale University. Before working at GYC, Louisa worked as an environmental reporter for High Country News, a social worker, a mountaineering instructor with National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), and the education director at the Teton Science School in Wyoming.

She is the only woman that I interviewed who did not hesitate when I asked about her role models and mentors. She mentioned three people: Dave Love of the United States Geographic Survey, "who I got to know working for High Country News, and he's just been a friend and kind of a mentor for many years. Mardi Murray, . . . sort of the parental figure at the Teton Science School, . . . and Tom Jorling, who was a professor of mine in college at Williams. . . . They've all been . . . important figures in terms of leaders and people I've looked to, and also people who gave me advice." She also said that her husband is an important person in her life who, as an attorney for the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, is also involved with many of the same environmental issues that she is.

Louisa reflected on past experiences that have helped her in her current work, especially problem-solving in complicated situations. "A

combination of college and education as a kid, and NOLS, and the Teton Science School in particular, all really helped." Also helpful has been "a broad-based background in dealing with people and dealing with difficult problems from kind of a broad sense. . . . NOLS really helped me with leadership in difficult situations . . . in terms of working as a coalition, trying to figure who will go the distance and what kinds of people you can rely on and how you develop a kind of a close-knit, functioning working group to get stuff done."

Louisa went to work at GYC in 1985, after leaving the Teton Science School because of a newly hired, sexist male supervisor. She has been with GYC as it has grown from a staff of four to a current staff of eighteen , and still has great enthusiasm for her work.

Teresa Erickson

Teresa Erickson, 40, struck me as a gritty, independent thinker who is deeply concerned about justice, and is committed to working for the economically and environmentally oppressed. She realizes the importance of her work, and yet maintains a good sense of humor about it. She was candid, energetic, and unpretentious during the interview, easily telling a goofy story about herself. Teresa is an unconventional woman.[30]

Much of her lack of convention comes from her upbringing, which was far from the stereotype of the middle class environmentalist upbringing. Teresa grew up in Telluride and Montrose, Colorado. Her mother is part Mexican and part Indian and cleaned houses for a living. Her father was a Swedish immigrant who worked in the uranium mines. "My dad was a super smart guy, and we worshipped him, I mean we hung on his every word, and the fact that he didn't go past the seventh grade was just more

interesting to us, . . . it didn't mean he was any less of a person." Because her father was usually away at the mines, Teresa and her sister were essentially raised by three women: her mother and her mother's two sisters. When her father was at home, "he drank like a fiend like all the miners did, and so even when he was home he wasn't always with us."

Her mother and aunts "came from families where abandonment by men was fairly common" often because of large families. So, Teresa and her sister "were raised with a non-hostile but very strong message about 'just don't ever rely on a man for money.'" This developed Teresa's sense of independence, which she feels is extremely important in her work.

Teresa also developed her sense of the injustices in the world at an early age. Her entire family experienced discrimination and Teresa gained "a hard edge about justice and that justice doesn't just happen naturally. . . . Justice is something you must seize and make happen." Her mother did a lot for the Catholic church and "she was nothing in the church, and the people who were something in the church were people who had money, and I thought it was basically unjust, and church is supposed to be the most just place."

Growing up in "heaven, Telluride Colorado, Montrose Colorado, some of the most beautiful places on earth" influenced her also. "I think that every day that we woke up and would look at that panoramic view that there was a sense of harmony, a sense of purpose, a drive that this is very important to fight for." Teresa's role models came primarily from her family. She looked up to her older sister, and particularly admired one of her aunts who was proud, honest, and a hard worker. She also mentioned Martin Luther King as a role model -- his words "struck a chord" inside of her and influenced her.

Teresa began as a grassroots activist mediating disputes between tenants and landlords for the Colorado Public Interest Research Group. "I've always had a pretty strong commitment to the environment and to social justice, just unspoken and unarticulated, and this job really gave me the opportunity to do something. . . . I was so satisfied in the work that I did that it replaced the desire to make money, because I felt happy and satisfied in this work."

When Teresa moved back to Montrose after graduating and travelling, she realized how much the area meant to her. She knew that she could apply her grass roots skills to saving some of the Colorado wilderness under siege at the time, but quickly learned that she could not work with the Denver-based environmental groups. "I got a chip on my shoulder about top down sort of decision making, and elitists in the environmental movement, people who are detached from people whose jobs are at stake, who basically isolate themselves from that." So she and her sister created the Western Colorado Congress in 1980 to work on wilderness and other environmental issues in their area of the state. Teresa eventually raised enough money to be hired as the first full-time staffperson.

Northern Plains Resource Council (NPRC) was the primary organization that she used for guidance in her new position. She eventually married the director of NPRC, who left his position as director to move to Colorado. In 1986, the director's position at NPRC again opened up, and Teresa was hired.

Outside of work, Teresa spends time with her husband. "We're members of the food co-op, [and are] fairly active in the Democratic Party." They travel a lot and spend time at their cabin on East Rosebud lake. They are also considering having a family. "I didn't think this would happen. . . . I'm

not real sure about it, but I'd definitely like to have a kid." She also loves to "cook, garden, make chokecherry jelly and tamales, big production, put-up-food type of productions where it takes 2 or 3 people all day, female type of thing."

These women represent a handful of the many facets of women environmentalists. A common theme for all of these women is a love for the land that developed early in their lives, and eventually helped steer them into environmental work. The women come from a range of social classes, not just the stereotypical middle class background of environmentalists. Their personalities and experiences contribute to their varied perspectives on and approaches to their work. Although some of the women (Chris, Janet E., Janet H., and Joan) have had a long-time concern with women's issues, others (Doris, Joanne, Louisa, and Teresa) did not mention that as a priority. Some women (Chris, and Janet E.) feel that they do not have the time or energy to commit to other causes, while for others (Doris, Teresa, Joanne, Joan) activism infuses their whole lives. There was a striking lack of role models and mentors mentioned by the women, although a few of them did mention at least one significant person who has affected them. All of the women are committed to social change and pursuing what they believe is right.

IV. The Organizations

To establish background context on the organizations in Montana for which these women have worked, I combined factual information on each organization with each woman's perception of her organizations. The factual information includes the gender makeup of the board and the staff over the past ten years, as well as what staff and board positions women have held. I also noted each organization's mission statement and newsletter content to illustrate the group's priorities and approaches to environmental problems. I looked at only those organizations which have paid staff, because organizations rarely keep track of the numbers of their volunteers.

Northern Plains Resource Council (NPRC)

Teresa Erickson, Staff Director

Northern Plains Resource Council is outwardly dedicated to people as well as the environment. Their mission statement reads:

> "Founded in 1972, NPRC is a Montana community-based organization with a strong connection to the land. Originally formed by ranchers, farmers and townspeople, NPRC is committed to land stewardship and social justice principles which ensure that Montana's air, land, water and unique quality of life are maintained and improved to ensure future generations a healthy, quality homeland. NPRC believes that the rural, urban and tribal communities of this region can prosper and thrive without destroying what makes Montana and this region truly "the last best place."[31]

NPRC is the only one of the surveyed organizations that mentions social justice principles in its mission statement. NPRC emphasizes community and quality of life along with land stewardship and air and water quality. This emphasis correlates with the fact that NPRC's constituency includes ranchers and farmers whose living is tied to the land.

NPRC's newsletter also addresses human values. The newsletter issue that I reviewed includes articles about the effect of air quality on communities, the importance of working in alliances with other organizations and communities, and how national economic issues will affect NPRC's constituency.[32]

The staff of NPRC consists of a staff director, research coordinator/ editor, office manager, development director, bookkeeper/special events, and six organizers. Although I was unable to determine the gender make-up over the last decade for NPRC, Teresa thought that both the board and the staff were relatively gender-balanced, with the staff occasionally having more men. Currently, there are four women out of eleven total staff. Two are organizers, one is staff director, and one is office manager. The bookkeeper, development director, editor, and four organizers are men. So although women are not the majority, they do hold positions of power. Because Teresa has been the staff director for eight years, she has had some say in the direction and focus of the organization.[33]

The Board of Directors consists of seven officers, four at-large members, and 25 people who represent fourteen organizations. The current board includes eighteen women and sixteen men. Women on the board hold the offices of vice president, secretary, assistant secretary, treasurer and assistant treasurer. The chair and past chair offices are held by men.[34]

Teresa expressed the organization's view of the root of environmental problems. "One philosophical underpinning we do have is that we believe that society benefits when you have a widely dispersed ownership of land and property. . . . We've always believed that when you have lots of people that own something, you have a much more stable society, and a society with a much higher self-esteem, because people have more control over their lives." She feels that this philosophy does come through in the organization's actions. "We've fought anti-trust behavior when we thought that the food system in particular was being controlled too much by big corporations." They have also worked to keep land in the hands of families rather than insurance companies when families are at risk of losing their farms to foreclosure.[35]

In terms of the political strategy of the organization, Teresa said, "we focus on our membership . . . we're organizers, we give other people the skills." Teresa feels that their use of democratic decision-making is crucial given this structure. "I think democratic decision-making develops good leaders. . . . You train people that if you have a position, . . . you must be able to articulate it and defend it, which clarifies their thinking on it, and it also sharpens their ability to do that on the outside." Using this method, "we naturally start to get a constituency that has depth, and has skill and understands how challenging your thinking within just gives you better thought in the end." Having a large constituency that can articulate its arguments is a strength for the organization because, "I think sometimes one of our most potent weapons is that they don't know who the hell we are for sure. . . . [We] can get a leader from Circle or Big Timber or Baker at any given moment to speak on any issue with expertise; that is unsettling to the powers that be."

Teresa's personal political process matches that of NPRC. "It's hard not to have the training and experience gained with Northern Plains infiltrate my life. . . . I feel a strong sense of commitment to the idea of democratic control, to the point where a lot of people don't get it sometimes and I feel frustrated; and being anal about demanding things like sending out agendas ahead of time so people know and can choose whether or not to come to meetings; that you run a meeting in a way that allows all people to have a say."

Overall Teresa feels that Northern Plains is effective "because we think real strategically in just about everything we do. There isn't a one-on-one or a phone call where we don't have pretty much figured out what it is we want to accomplish with those kinds of visits." As far as what she would change in the organization, Teresa said, "I wish we could pay people more money. . . . I feel like I work with some of the best people who really deserve to be rewarded financially and I feel frustrated and guilty that we haven't been able to do it."

Whether the organization has shaped Teresa or vice versa or both, it seems to reflect her ideas on social justice, and the importance of people working together to fight for the land and for the people who live there.

Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC)

Chris Kaufmann, Lobbyist and Issue Work

Joan Bird, Field Office

For MEIC's twentieth anniversary, the staff compiled a list of all of the people who have worked for the organization, both as board members and as staff. Given the number of these people who are still working within the

environmental movement in Montana, MEIC seems to be an incubator for environmental work in the state.

MEIC's mission statement, "To protect and restore Montana's Natural Environment," gives the organization leeway to address any number of environmental problems in the state. Lobbying is a primary focus of the organization. The newsletter that I reviewed gives a better sense of how MEIC approaches environmental problems. Three articles are about lawsuits which MEIC filed against mining companies and a landfill company. Most of the articles call corporations to task for their actions affecting Montana's natural environment, and most were written by Jim Jensen, the executive director. The newsletter has a fairly confrontational tone and the focus seems to be more on informing than on involving members in the activities.[36]

The Board of Directors of MEIC has eleven members as of May, 1994, including four officers. The staff positions are executive director, business manager, development director, issue specialist, and energy specialist. Since 1980, the make-up of the board has been fairly evenly split between men and women -- about 40 out of 83 total board members have been women. Currently, the board has 5 women out of a total of 11 members; one woman holds an office -- president. The gender makeup of the staff over the past ten years has also been fairly evenly split -- 21 out of 42 total staff have been women. Women have worked on issues, publications, lobbying and fundraising. Jim Jensen has been the executive director for the past nine years and was director when Chris Kaufmann worked there. Don Snow was the director during Joan Bird's employment. The business manager is a man who has held the position for 10 years. Currently, two out of five total staff are women, working on issues and fundraising. Except for the executive

director position, women have consistently held influential positions over the past decade.[37]

When Chris worked at MEIC, she "felt like there wasn't enough attention being paid to the human part of the natural environment and relationships between people. . . . I could be working on [an issue] and the same time think, 'is this really at the heart of the issue?'" However, she feels that, although not stated in the mission statement, MEIC recognizes the link between environmental problems and human oppression. "So much of MEIC is Jim Jensen. . . . I think Jim does have this bigger picture about how it's all connected [but] I'm not sure that the board does."[38]

Chris feels that building coalitions is not something on which MEIC focuses. "I definitely would change [the organization] to work better in coalitions with other environmental groups and progressive groups. . . . I think [they] feel like they are just out there fighting an environmental battle." Her current organization, the Montana Human Rights Network, "invited MEIC to be a co-sponsor of our conference, talking about the Christian Right, and Jim wanted to and his board said 'that has nothing to do with who we are.'" Chris described her personal political process as "[trying] to bring a lot of people into decision-making. . . . I want to build coalitions with other groups."

Regarding MEIC's philosophy of political process, Chris said, "Well, consensus isn't it" but that it was not clearly defined or talked about when she worked there. She said that the organization is hierarchically structured, and that decisions are made "pretty top down, . . . with Jim being the director, pretty much the top, and controlling the board. . . . And I wouldn't say the staff was consulted and that decisions were made considering everybody's input." Chris said that she did not have a "huge problem" with the way

decisions were made. "I personally think I prefer working in [a process] that moves a little more fast [than a democratic process]."

The Nature Conservancy

Joan Bird, Protection Planner

Joanne Big Crane, intern

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is "to preserve plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive." The Conservancy's focus is on protecting habitat. The newsletter includes articles about various land acquisitions -- purchases, gifts, and conservation easements -- along with stories of the people who have given land. One article was about the Conservancy's heritage program which catalogues rare, native plants in Montana. Three pages of the newsletter included lists of people who have given money and gifts to the Conservancy.[39]

In the Big Sky Field Office, where Joan worked, there is a state director and eight staff. There are 25 Chapter Trustees, who serve as the board of directors. Four out of nine staff in the office are women. Their positions are director of administration, administrative assistant, director of communications, and membership services administrator. The men's positions are state director, director of land conservation, director of program development, education program coordinator, and field representative. The women's positions tend toward assistants and administrative roles, while the men seem to be in decision-making positions. Eleven out of 25 Trustees are women.

Joanne Big Crane feels that her position as an intern at the Conservancy gave her excellent experience in using her knowledge of plants

in a culturally-sensitive way. She experienced sexism on the job with her supervisor; however, he was actually employed by Salish Kootenai College. She feels that the structure of the organization worked well for her, but said that, not having worked in the office, she could not comment on that area of the organization.[40]

Joan Bird's comments stem from seven years of working with the organization. She said that the Conservancy's perspective on the origin of environmental destruction is "just a lot of development without a lot of awareness of the value of the diversity of species," but that there is "less interest in figuring out what the cause was and more interest in trying to create positive changes." She said that the organization does not consider the possible existence of a relation between environmental problems and social issues. She said, "there are certainly people in the organization who are very progressive and understand those connections. [But] in general, the power elite in the organization tends to be white male, and owning class, and I think that that does cause some limited ability to see how class issues and gender issues and cultural racial issues are related to environmental exploitations."[41]

Joan talked about the philosophy of political process within the organization, emphasizing the size of the national organization and that her office was only a small part of the whole. "There are a lot of people [in the organization as a whole] who believe very strongly in the democratic process and in offices being democratically run, . . . however, when the situation arose when you had a person [(the state director)] who was very confident to the point of being arrogant, and unwilling to let go of some control, [top management] defended his right to make decisions without consulting the other people in the office." Joan described herself as "a strong believer in

democratic process, consensus building, . . . everyone needs to be heard; [I] believe strongly that everyone needs to be acknowledged for their contributions." Her relationship with the director whom she feels had "a lack of tolerance for different opinions" was understandably strained.

Joan perceives that the national office works in a similar way. "The feedback that I heard said that there was a lot of unilateral decision-making by the president. . . . I think that the organization would have said that it believed in the democratic process in the workplace and yet when it came down to it there was a lot of hierarchical power manipulation." Joan said that, when she worked there, the core management staff in the Washington D.C. office was all male except for a female director of human resources -- "the pink collar track of the organization." She said that "this group of white men [had begun] to receive comments from the outside" about the lack of women working for the Conservancy, but that "the hilarious thing is that 75 percent of the people who work for the Nature Conservancy are women! They just are all in support staff."

Joan feels positively about the Conservancy's philosophy which is that "the Conservancy's . . . emphasis was on finding opportunities for cooperation and collaboration, and [on] being that catalyst that can create cooperative venture." Regarding whether the organization could be more effective if it framed its issues differently, Joan said, "I think the organization continues to appeal to a group of people who otherwise may be fairly conservative, to owning class, power elite, who are beginning to understand that there is an environmental crisis and that this sounds like a good thing to do about it. And it could be that that group of people would not be very open to hearing about the connection between environmental exploitation and human exploitation."

Montana Audubon Council

Janet Ellis, Program Director

The Montana Audubon Council's mission is to work "for the conservation of wildlife and natural communities . . . " The organization is the political voice for the Audubon chapters in Montana, which are geographically spread out and have relatively small individual memberships. Janet Ellis has been the director since the organization opened its office in 1989. She has been the only paid staffperson until the past few years, during which two other fulltime employees, both women, have also worked there. Currently, Janet, as director, works with one other woman staffperson. The staff works with the executive council as well as each of the local chapters around the state.[42]

The board consists of four officers and sixteen boardmembers who represent eight Audubon chapters around the state. Currently, seven boardmembers and two officers -- treasurer and vice president -- are women. All but one of the chapters elected one woman and one man to be on the board, and the exception elected two men. The treasurer and vice president both are women. The board has been fairly gender-balanced in the past years, and women have shown a marked presence as officers of the organization.

Historically, the Audubon Society has historically been concerned with bird issues, but it addresses loss of habitat which affects any species. Montana Audubon relies heavily on volunteers from around the state to accomplish its goals. The newsletter is education-oriented, with a focus on recruiting volunteers and keeping them interested and recognized. It's articles are geared to helping people become involved by giving them information.

There was also a section called "Armchair Activist" which enables people to sign up to receive action alerts and other information.[43]

Janet said that the style of the board and the organization is "not very confrontational -- they do want to seem like middle of the road. Bringing people together and working together is a comfortable place for most of the board people." She said that "there is definitely a social aspect to Audubon [which is nice because] they don't always have to be issue driven per se. . . . It's a nice sort of first step, . . . that if you teach them to care about the wildlife and birds in particular, then maybe they'll make the transition to take a second step and realize that if the habitat's not there we're going to lose [the birds]."[44]

As far as the organization's view of the root of environmental problems, Janet said, "I think the root of it all is people and population. One of the things I'm really proud of National Audubon is they really led a lot of the conservation groups in international family planning stuff; . . . it steered away from the abortion issue, but it's been definitely pro family planning because the root of it is population, and consumption levels in the United States."

The board of the Council makes decisions by consensus, which it uses "if things get divisive. . . . There was an attempt to bludgeon through something so they decided to put a process in place." Janet often makes decisions herself, without consulting the board, "because of the loose structure of our board, but because I've worked with them so long I know where I'm safe and where I need to check with people." Having a supportive organization behind her has helped Janet deal with issues such as sexism that come from outside of the organization.

Janet feels that the "lack of consistency on the board" is the most troubling for her. "Some chapters do send a consistent delegate, some change

a lot which is difficult. It would be nice if it were a prestigious position, where there was someone appointed who took it seriously, but we're not there yet." She also thinks that the organization could be more effective if it had more of a media presence. She feels that the Council works well as "a strong grassroots structure for an organization in the state of Montana," and is impressed by "all these people who are doing a lot of little things that are improving their communities from a conservation perspective. . . . I think that's the most magical part about Audubon."

Montana Wilderness Association

Doris Milner, board member and board president

Louisa Willcox, board member

The Montana Wilderness Association (MWA) is "dedicated to the conservation of Montana's wild public lands and resources." The newsletter that I reviewed contains quite a bit of technical information, and not much "what you can do" information. Its focus seems to be updating people on issues. The articles do not seem confrontational. It features several guest writers, including accomplished writers such as Rick Bass, and seems to be an educational essay piece. Only two out of the ten writers are women.[45]

MWA has a long history of women in their leadership positions, especially on their board. The association was a volunteer organization until the 1980's, when a woman was hired as the first staffperson. There has been no staff turnover since the office started. Currently, there are eight people on the staff -- four men and four women. The women hold the positions of part-time lobbyist in Washington DC, field coordinator in Billings, education director, and bookkeeper/clerical. The men's positions are conservation chair, executive director, field coordinator in Kalispell, and field coordinator

in Great Falls. According to John Gatchell, with whom I spoke at MWA, women have been in leadership positions on the board since the 1960's and the board is and has been gender-balanced over the past decade. A woman is currently the chair of the board.[46]

Doris' experience as the first woman president of the board was a positive one, and significant for her "because I didn't feel that I was ready for it because it was a very active organization. . . . I guess like having a baby, you go ahead. The members were nothing but supportive and I had wonderful council members. . . . Everybody was interested in what was going on and we pulled together quite well. It was a happy experience."

The decision-making on the board, according to Doris, was "a democratic process, we chewed everything over and people were supportive of each other. . . . The bottom line was what is good for wilderness? and so you had a common denominator that generally took out the personal part." Doris' views on her personal decision-making process are "personally you don't make your own decisions, you listen to your board if you're going to be effective. You can present your feelings and what you feel and why, but this has to go through the board. . . . They were good people who were dedicated to the cause so you're stupid if you don't use your people."[47]

Doris commented on things that she would have changed about MWA. "For a long time it was primarily a male board, not because there was any antagonism toward women, but early on, in the early seventies, women hadn't really gotten into this too much yet. . . . I was president for three terms; by the second [term, other women came on]. I don't know whether that was because I was on it or not. Not that I had anything against the men, the women add a little something else to it, I don't know what, but I enjoyed having women come on the board."

Doris feels that MWA's actions are consistent with its mission because "everyone who comes on there has a reason, cares for wilderness, or the outdoors or whatever so it's a pretty dedicated group, pretty single-minded."

Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Coalition

Janet Henderson, Office Manager

The Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Coalition is "dedicated to protecting and restoring water quality in the Clark Fork River Basin." It is concerned with preventing water pollution and ensuring clean-up of water-quality problems, especially those resulting from past or potential mining projects. The Coalition currently has three offices, one each in Missoula; Sandpoint, Idaho; and Butte. The executive director and issue staff are based in Missoula, while the Sandpoint and Butte offices are staffed by one person each. The board of directors consists of members from locations along the river from Butte to Sandpoint.

The gender make-up of the board has fluctuated, but has been mostly men. Since 1986, women have made up between one-sixth and one-third of the board members, occasionally holding offices including secretary (most often), president once and vice president once. Recently, the make-up has been closer to 50 percent women. The gender make-up of the staff has also fluctuated. Up until 1993, two out of the five staff were women: a field staff in Sandpoint, and an office manager. So, the office manager (Janet Henderson) was the only woman in the Missoula office. During that time the board fluctuated between one-third and one-quarter women.[48]

In 1993, the executive directorship changed hands to a man who was much more sensitive to women's issues. He hired three women to join the staff. So after 1993, the majority of the staff were women: business manager,

development director, upper river field staff, and Sandpoint field staff. The executive director and two issue staff were men. Janet only worked a short time with the new director.

The newsletter deals with water issues and threats to the Clark Fork River basin. The articles are educational and let people know how they can help.[49] Janet Henderson feels that the Coalition's mission is "sort of a band-aid approach -- I don't mean it in a negative way -- because the mission of the Clark Fork Coalition is mostly clean up. I see its philosophy as being sort of narrow in a way . . . 'bad things have happened to the environment and then we gotta fix them up' . . . that's appropriate for that organization, but it's really limited in some ways too." She feels that the Coalition "is a good example of an environmental group that's just an environmental group and they see certain environmental tasks that need to be done and they're going to do them, and they do them well, and I think their focus works for them. . . . That decision about the Clark Fork basin [is] really the guiding light."[50]

As far as whether the Coalition could be more effective by framing its issues differently, Janet said, "I think the Clark Fork Coalition is effective at what they do because they are sort of narrow and focused in philosophy. But on a broader perspective I think they're missing some things that make them less effective. . . . For the long-term improvement of the world, I think their philosophy being broadened to how interrelated humans and nature and the problems of both are would be helpful, although it might bog them down in process." Janet's personal political process tends to be consensus-driven. Because she did not devote much energy to the organization, any difference between her own and the Coalition's political process did not concern her much.

Greater Yellowstone Coalition

Louisa Willcox, Program Director

The mission of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC) is "to preserve and protect the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the unique quality of life it sustains." GYC works on a relatively large geographic area --the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem -- employs a larger staff than any other organization I looked at, and has a nationally based board, including several nationally recognized names. GYC employs eighteen staffpersons; the board of directors consists of 23 members including three officers, and the Science Council has sixteen members.[51]

The total number of board members has grown from 12 to 23 in the past ten years. Especially in recent years, women have made up less than one quarter of the board. In earlier years, the number was closer to one half. GYC also has a Science Council made up of 16 men. Louisa Willcox has been at GYC since 1986. From then, although the staff has grown and now employs more women than men, women have been hired more often into assistant positions. The executive director has always been a man. Men have held positions of development director, project director, communications director, associate program director, legal assistant, project assistant, and program assistant. The women have held the positions of program director, membership director, associate program director, office manager, program staff assistant, staff assistant, receptionist, and administrative assistant.

The newsletter contains many informational articles about the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. They do not seem to be aimed at involving the reader in action. However, there is an emphasis on working in coalition with other environmental groups and outside interests.[52]

Despite this, Louisa feels that in terms of gender make-up, "GYC is seen as unusual -- people are surprised that we have a woman president of the board, and Jeanne-Marie [Souvigney, associate program director] and I are pretty much outspoken and all -- that we have this many women in pretty key positions. I've been here a long time, but there are other ones as well. I think that's unusual and I think the bigger the group the less that is likely."[53]

Regarding the organizational structure, Louisa said, "I'm program director here but I don't really make people do things. We decide what problems need to be dealt with, . . . we'll get together and talk about what are we doing, [what] is the best way. . . . Because if you get to feel like you're actually making people do stuff, or getting into the power of it, people are a lot less eager to produce. If they have ownership over their issues, and how it plays out of responsibility, that's always a better way."

Louisa feels that the group frames its issues effectively and said "there's a whole ranking of issues that we try to develop as to how it will affect the ecosystem and ecosystem functioning. . . . You have to decide: it's really a question of resources, and a question of what's the most important thing you can accomplish?" The organizations tries to look at each problem from many points of view. "You commit to [the campaign] and then you take a step back and say how do you move the ball, socially, economically, with data, with education, with press, with legal and legislative strategy at the state or federal level, whichever makes sense."

The organizations described above illustrate the range of environmental organizations in Montana. The approaches to environmental issues taken by these organizations include grass-roots organizing of volunteers, lobbying the legislature to affect public policy,

acquiring land to set aside for habitat, educating the public, and building coalitions with other groups. Only one organization (NPRC) outwardly considers social justice in relation to environmental problems, but others (MEIC, Montana Audubon, GYC), according to the women, seem to consider this connection in some of their actions. The priorities of NPRC, MEIC and the Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Coalition include issues such as water or air quality, mining, and hazardous waste that pertain to public health. The priorities of the other four organizations are primarily protection of ecosystems, habitat, and wilderness, although both sets of concerns often overlap.

The organizations use different styles, from confrontation to cooperation, to attain their goals, but most of the groups' styles incorporate some element of cooperation and coalition-building. The groups also use a variety of decision-making processes, including consensus, democratic process, and top-down decision-making. The organizations that use more of a collective decision-making process (NPRC, Montana Audubon, MWA, and GYC) are groups with which the women expressed the most satisfaction. Additionally, when the organizations' political processes agreed with those of the women that worked there, the women received greater fulfillment from their jobs.

V. Factors Affecting Women's Effectiveness and Job Satisfaction

During the interviews with these eight women, three categories of experience emerged relating to the women's job satisfaction and sense of effectiveness as environmental activists. These categories were: personal strengths and skills; encounters with sexism, racism, classism, and heterosexism; and how relationships affected their work.

Strengths, Skills, and Effectiveness

The women responded candidly to my questions about where in their jobs they feel effective and ineffective. The discussion included effects on their feelings of effectiveness such as their work environment, sexism, and their upbringing. I also asked them to talk about empowering experiences they had had to see what these women feel were sources of power for them.

Chris Kaufmann feels that an area of strength is her writing skill. "That's a recent piece that I've worked pretty hard on . . . grant-writing . . . and writing for newsletters and things like that." Chris also feels that she effectively organizes events and plans of actions. She has difficulty, however, reading "the mood of the group. . . . I'm just kind of totally unaware of that underlying plane of non-verbals."[54]

Political settings are an area in which Chris feels "fairly ineffective. . . . This I think relates to self-esteem issues." Although people think of her as a good lobbyist, "I never felt like I was a good one. . . . I never felt like I was very good at guessing . . . what was going to make an argument effective in the

legislative political kind of arena." Chris also feels uncomfortable with the unwritten requirements of being a lobbyist. "The hard part of being a lobbyist for me is I didn't like to go to those social functions, where you had to schmooze. . . . I found that kind of fake and so I tried to stay away from those kinds of situations." She also senses inherent sexism in the legislative arena. "When you stand up in front of committee and say things, how you're dressed and how you look is a much more important piece of the message than it is for men."

Regarding how to be effective as a woman in the environmental and legislative arenas, Chris said, "You put on an air of confidence that you may not feel, because I think a lot of men in particular do better with powerful women. If a woman comes at them with some kind of personal power, [she'll] be treated differently than if there's some perception of weakness. . . . You learn to at least appear to have that personal power even though you may not be feeling it at the moment."

When I asked if anything has prevented her from performing at 100% of her potential, she responded, "the whole time that I worked in the public interest movement I have given 100% and more than 100%." However, while working for the state "I gave less than 100% because it's not required to do 100%. . . . There was not anything pushing me to do excellent work. . . . Nobody really cared from their heart about putting out an excellent piece as opposed to a good piece. . . . It didn't suit me well."

Chris' ideal work situation would be to work at home. "Have this discreet period of time where you interact and talk about the ideas, and then go work hard." The "luxury of even having your own office . . . with a door you can close" is rare in public interest work and would be ideal, she feels.

Moving to Helena to work for MEIC was an empowering experience for Chris. "At MEIC, I would say that the director respected my work and respected my opinions on things . . . I felt that people were more seeing what I had to offer" than at WORD. Another empowering experience was when she was invited to give the keynote address at a conference. At this conference, she "heard Suzanne Farr . . . speak about the connections between the various oppressions. . . . That was certainly a powerful experience for me, to hear her and talk with her." The Human Rights Network later put on a conference responding to the religious right "and the Christian Coalition tried to shut us down. . . . During that time I felt like I got a lot of support from people. . . . They didn't shut our conference down of course, five times as many people came as were expected and we made a lot of money!"

Doris Milner feels that one of her strengths in working to save the Selway was never considering if people respected her opinion; "I was thinking about the Selway by golly, and you know, you don't really think about yourself." An additional advantage was Doris' age and depth of experience. "I wasn't just fifteen, you know . . . I had had a little experience." And as far as taking things personally, "I'm sure [the Forest Service] talked behind my back, but that's all right, I do it too!" She also knows that, "establishing credibility is very very important when you're dealing with a delegation, because once they find that you're feeding them a bunch, forget it." Doris' key to being effective is "if you really want to stick to something, you have to feel it deeply because perseverance is what's required. You just have to keep after it, and after it, and if you don't really believe in what you're doing, it becomes a burden and you lose your fire."[55]

Doris felt ineffective when she didn't know what to do next. "You know, we'd get all these people gat [sic] up and say, 'okay, now you write letters,' and they'd write the letters, and nothing would happen. You know, this was time after time that nothing happened, and you'd begin to wonder. Many times there were frustrations." When she first began her activism, she felt ineffective because of lack of experience. "Some of us were pretty bad when we started out [as far as] technique, how to meet the public and how to make your points, and not to take offense and how to talk around a question. You have to learn those things."

Doris spoke about experiences that have been empowering for her. "Sometimes . . . you would open a magazine and somebody had done a nice article about the area . . . or people would send you money and write letters. The personal support was very important." Also, "once in a while the delegation would come through with a letter of 'well, we're considering your desires,' that sort of thing, but you knew better than to think that it was an accomplished fact. You got over being simplistic real quick!"

Janet Ellis feels comfortable and effective as a "one on one" lobbyist. She feels that she does her homework, and is best at "being real concrete, [and] systematically figuring out" what needs to get done. She feels that the legislators appreciate the fact that she really knows her facts. She also feels skilled at not pre-judging people based on their gender. "I really try to find peoples' strengths and pull that out and use those strengths; I think that's a really positive way I approach working with people."[56]

The media is the primary area where Janet feels ineffective. She feels that she is "gun-shy of the press" mainly because she is "not sure what to expect. I've never had really any negative experiences with the press. . . . Part

of it is, I don't understand it, in what makes news and what doesn't." Although she feels effective at one-on-one interactions, she does not feel confident as a public speaker. She also feels ineffective when she reaches "a threshold where I have to go home at night because I'm burned out, and I can't do anymore." She tries to pace herself in this way, even though it may go against personal or organizational expectations.

The empowering experience that Janet relayed was based on a long battle in the legislature to pass the Non-Game Checkoff Bill "because nobody thought we could do it" and they had a lot of support from National Audubon on the bill.

Janet Henderson reflected on her feelings of ineffectiveness working with environmental groups. "At the time that I began to participate in the environmental movement pretty actively, I was also coming to terms with . . . feminist issues and my place in the world as a woman." She feels that, at that time, although her awareness of and response to sexism strengthened her effectiveness in some ways, it also hampered her ability to accomplish things. "I was so aware and uncomfortable about [the sexisms] that that just sort of got in my way. [I was not able to] move past that." She needed to leave the environmental movement to regain her effectiveness.[57]

Janet feels that, while working at Women's Place, she has "evolved as a feminist and as a woman. Having that break away from fighting those dynamics, and working with women [has helped me] feel . . . a lot stronger and more self confident." She believes that working with all women has been beneficial for her. "I think that some forms of separatism are often necessary for . . . oppressed groups of people to get over certain hurdles for their empowerment." Working at Women's Place has been empowering

because it has allowed her to find her power and her voice without having to constantly fight sexist energy. Janet also was empowered when "the local Greens chapter recruited me to be involved [because they] valued my perspective as a feminist and as an environmental activist."

Joan Bird loved her work at the Nature Conservancy, and felt skilled at building bridges between the Conservancy and agencies with which they needed to work. "I had created a statewide natural area system, I had founded a new tribal lands program, [and] I had cultivated some significant donors to the program." Joan realizes that, because the state director's workstyle differed so much from hers, he did not recognize the importance of her accomplishments. "I do things in a different way and I think that reflects the fact that I'm a woman, and my value on relationships."[58]

Joan's feelings of ineffectiveness during this time stemmed partly from her own self-doubts, but primarily from the work environment at the Conservancy. During her pregnancy, she was critical of herself because of her low energy level. She grew increasingly tired, even after her child was born. When the new state director was hired, and she further struggled with the incompatibility of their work styles and his lack of support for her work. She has since gained perspective on how her work was affected by her pregnancy. "Late pregnancy -- I was pregnant at 38 and delivered at 39 -- is tremendously taxing on the body, and yet I was suffering all these feelings of guilt and inadequacy because I wasn't able to be as hard driving and as physical. There were a lot of days when all I could do was work. . . . I'd come home at five thirty and I'd go straight to bed I was so tired." From the time she became pregnant, she found it difficult to "maintain the kind of energy level that was required in that environment."

Joan has learned to break through those barriers of her internal oppression by reflecting on her successes. "To start something new is always really scary to me. . . . I have to look back at the things I've done and say, oh, well look at that! That's right, maybe I could do this!" One of Joan Bird's empowering experiences was overcoming the lack of support for her doctoral thesis. She found the project through undergraduate contacts, paid her way to the West Indies, wrote grants to fund her research, and completed the thesis, all without support from the department. "When I look back on it, it's pretty amazing, I didn't have anybody handing me a research associateship, I didn't even have anybody writing the grant proposal for me. I did it all straight through." Joan's spirituality is also a source of power for her. "My awareness of myself as a spiritual being has always . . . given me a train of thought of support for the idea that I was just as good as any man, that there is no gender in spirituality."

Teresa Erickson's upbringing provided her with unique advantages as an activist. Because her parents were poor she "did not fit the profile of a wilderness advocate at all and it gave my sister and I, in my mind anyway, a lot of credibility." She and her sister, Helen, grew up in the midst of wilderness, which gave them strong convictions about the importance of preserving it. Any opposition that they encountered -- including death threats -- only "thickened our skin, it made us want to fight more. . . . Persistence is partly why I think I've been successful."[59]

Teresa's persistence sustained her early in her activism when her inexperience caused her difficulties in her work. She initially did not know how to be a boss. "I made terrible mistakes as a boss on how to motivate people, how to delegate things to people." This was exacerbated by the

independence that she learned growing up "I probably have had more problems asking for help than some people. . . . [My sister and I are] more oriented to turn to ourselves to figure it out." She also feels that the ability to think strategically "is one area where I felt a lot of insecurity and frustrations; it was like I had to crack this thing that was limiting my brain so I could think more strategically. . . . I started realizing that everything we do can be strategic if you're smart about it."

One of Teresa's frustrations is her "inability to have respect for rich people" and the problems that that poses in terms of fundraising. "We were just raised to think that rich people couldn't possibly have come by their money honestly and that rich people basically screw poor people. . . . I don't like that relationship, they've got something, I want it, and it's that power thing, it's that injustice thing and it bugs me." And yet her background has made her "effective working with . . . people who are low to moderate income, or farmers or ranchers or people who actually come from the area, because I can relate more to their commitment to an area, their lack of worldliness because they haven't been exposed to different things. . . . [I have] an appreciation for simplicity in people, and faith that just because you don't have education does not mean you're not smart."

Regarding the area where she feels most effective, Teresa said "I think the only thing I would really say I feel real positive about is love. I love the people that I work with, I love the land that I'm trying to save, and water and animals and fish, and my place on earth is very clear to me. . . . I think that's probably one of the strongest things that's kept me doing this kind of business. . . . That love for people, and love for your work . . . is incredibly powerful, so powerful that you can freak out your opposition with it, it gives you something that no one can ever take from you." She is also very

motivated by wanting to "win a little justice back, even out the playing fields a little more." She also said that curiosity helps her motivation. "I'm naturally very curious about stuff. . . . When you meet some dirtball on the bus, rather than just being bummed out by it, if you're curious, you're going, 'how does a person like you get to where you are?' and it helps you just figure that out."

Teresa mentioned many experiences that she considered empowering. When she was a novice staff director at the Western Colorado Congress, her all-male staff tried to get her fired because of her lack of management skills. Fortunately, her board believed in her and did not fire her. The board's decision and her subsequent quest to learn management techniques was empowering for her. She also mentioned the power of working for a candidate in elections. "Working for a candidate, getting them elected and having it pay off for us in terms of a vote is a very empowering experience." She feels strongly about the power of "working with a member that may have begun as a difficult or disinterested person or someone with no skills at all and then slowly over time watching them transform into a capable, competent, loyal, dedicated, effective leader. And the same with staff . . . that's very empowering in terms of a staff director because . . . I feel like I can help people have faith in themselves which is hard to do. . . . Often at the member level we work with people who have often been overlooked by other people because they're not handsome or beautiful or articulate or the classic definition of a leader. But in your gut opinion or hunch you sense that there is something there waiting to be unleashed and you work with them and you're right."

Louisa Willcox considers her education as having given her skills to be effective. "Coming out of experience in a broad humanities background, [I gained] a sense of looking at different pieces of a problem: how the media contributes to the problem, how social and public attitudes, [politics], economic factors, and the legal framework . . . often [combine to] inhibit a intelligent decision for the environment. . . . Being able to take all these different factors that contribute to kind of a knot of a problem and figure out how to unravel it . . . is tough."[60]

Louisa mentioned in her questionnaire that she had a "strong-willed bearing." I asked if that has been an advantage or a disadvantage to her. She said that it is a mixed bag. "Mostly it's an advantage, [but] I really turn a lot of people off . . . like, 'who is this chick? What the hell does she think?. . . I've lived all my life as a logger and blah blah and here's this lady who thinks she knows everything about all this bullshit.' . . . I'm not sometimes the best person to send into a situation." She said that the combination of personalities in the office works well because they send in the person who will work best with the people with whom they are dealing.

When I asked Louisa to describe any empowering experiences, she said, "empowering is a funny word, because I don't . . . think in those terms I guess. I'm trying to think of what that means. I mean, fulfilling, yes, but empowering, it's like it means you've got more?" So she described some fulfilling experiences instead. She mentioned a few NOLS courses where "the chemistry was just right, everybody had different personalities and they approached problems differently, but they complemented each other really well." She felt fulfilled when her organization succeeded in gaining Wild and Scenic designation for the Clark's Fork River after putting a lot of work into building a coalition of unexpected allies -- environmental groups, the

Chamber of Commerce, the Forest Service, and the sugar beet farmers. When they convinced the governor to join, "that was like the defining moment on that, where I realized we were going to get there. . . everything was going to fall into place. . . . So there were sometimes those moments where you can see that it wasn't totally futile, that you did have a pretty good read of the situation . . . and the right things were in place to make that happen, the right people, the right constituencies."

Joanne Big Crane's knowledge of plants and her multi-faceted skills are strengths that she brings to everyday life. Joanne combines her background in plants, her schooling in Native American studies, and her experiences as a nursing mentor and a museum curator to gain perspective on her work and life and events on the reservation. She feels effective at merging her scientific knowledge with the knowledge of plants that she gained working with her parents. "When it comes down to understanding the chemical makeup of a plant, like for a traditional medicinal use, I can see how it relates, and I have an understanding of the chemical make-up and how it operates with the body, in a totally different sense than people do when they just look at it molecularly." She also feels effective at teaching others about these connections.[61]

Joanne feels that she could be more effective if she had more education. "My 'brightness' can serve me fairly well, but when it comes down to some courses of some particular [scientific type techniques or methods] that I need to apply, I haven't received those things." She doesn't necessarily want "the alphabet soup behind my name, but just . . . the direct experiences and the knowledge that education can provide."

One of the things that keeps Joanne from working at 100% is "having to be an Indian in a non-Indian society. . . . Sometimes there are things that I have to do that I just don't see the point of. . . . I spend a lot of energy trying to figure out how I can do this and do it my way as a tribal person."

Joanne finds her knowledge empowering, especially when faced with people who think that she does not know anything because she is an Indian. "When I start whipping out my botany and all of my other stuff, and people are going like, 'well, gee, I guess you do know something after all' . . . that kind of adds to my sense of, well, I want to know more." Her job at the Nature Conservancy was empowering for her as well. "It validated my interests at that point in plants, helping me see in what direction I could take my studies as a student of natural resources and Native American studies." It is also powerful for her to be part of a culture that "has pretty much pulled themselves up by the bootstraps; and they're really changing their lives" -- addressing alcoholism, poverty, abuse, social problems on the reservation.

Experiences with sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism

The women's experiences with the "-ism's" -- sexism, racism, classism and heterosexism -- were very diverse. Some of the women were barely affected by these experiences; others experienced career problems as a result of them; and some left environmental work entirely due to them. The "old boy network" in Montana is a recurring theme in many of the women's stories. Of the women in the group who are lesbian, one wanted to remain anonymous as far as being a lesbian, so I will not include names when I discuss the women's experiences with heterosexism.

Chris Kaufmann said that all of the "isms" are problems in the environmental movement. "In Montana," she said, "[environmental groups] excuse themselves by saying 'well, there really aren't any minorities here.' Even if your whole board and whole staff ends up being whitebread, it's the way you look at issues [that's important]." Chris feels that women in the environmental movement are not taken seriously, and are often the ones doing the work that make the men's ideas happen. She said that many people in the environmental movement "just won't do anything in terms of making the movement work for women to assume positions of leadership. . . You almost never see women being spokespersons for environmental stuff." She feels that, although many women are involved in local battles, "they tend to be cast in a role of concerned mommies." Chris is one of several of the women who mentioned an organization that called a conference, and "they [couldn't] even think of a woman speaker to bring in. . . When there are women's names on the program it's sort of like an accident, like it wasn't thought about that we need to realize that we have women members."[62]

Chris' more direct experiences with sexism occurred while lobbying. "I don't think you ever really, especially in those political settings, get away from women as a sexual object kind of talk, [and] there's just more of a feeling that what you say is not going to be taken as seriously as what the boys say." When her co-workers in state government told sexist jokes, Chris' response was "generally just not to laugh and not to give them any positive feedback; on some occasions I would point them out."

Chris knew that she wanted to be executive director of an organization, but never applied for that position in an environmental group because she "just had the feeling that there was a boys' club there" and that she would not have been able to be as effective as she is in her work in human rights. "Men

are the people that are dictating [the environmental] movement and deciding where it's going." She feels that, because the Human Rights Network is a young organization, that she is the first executive director, and that it takes a unique angle on issues, "I don't have to buck the whole history of what's been going on in the state."

Doris Milner is one of the women who feels that she either has not encountered sexism or has not been aware of it. "I guess I wasn't looking for it." She said that she has never felt put down by men. "I think that came from school where I was a good student and I got better grades than the boys did. . . . I just didn't feel like a second class citizen." So she learned at an early age that she was just as good as any of the boys. She also said that everyone in her activist work has been helpful to her including men of all ages. This is probably primarily due to her strong personality rather than a question of viewpoint from a lack of feminist awareness. A friend of Doris' close to her age filled out one of my questionnaires and indicated that, at some meetings of people fighting a mine in the Bitterroot Valley, she has felt that she is not respected because she is a woman.[63]

Janet Ellis has encountered sexism from outside of her organization rather than within it. "Montana's so full of good old boy systems that that gets really frustrating to me, and I don't know what to do about it. . . . It's just sort of, 'well it's always been done this way' sort of attitude; . . . it's this wall that you walk up against and you feel like you would be treated differently [if you were a man]." She related examples of working very hard on certain issues, while other people, usually men or male-led organizations, received the credit. She also told about a time when she had worked closely with the

Department of State Lands on an issue during the legislature, but later during the special session, they did not contact her about a hearing on the issue -- they instead contacted Jim Jensen at MEIC, and Janet felt "shut out of the process."[64]

During another incident, Janet was at a commission meeting with Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. They only briefly discussed the issue with which she was concerned. "But on the issue of hunting and who's going to get the hunting permits, it was like, 'Oh, I've got a son in law from out of state and he wants to get preference.' . . . It just was so gross to me that they really didn't care what was right." Janet said that the State Department of Agriculture is particularly sexist. One of their employees who had treated her "horribly and rudely" was dismissed, in her understanding, because of sexual harassment charges. "Being dismissed from the Department of Agriculture for sexual harassment charges, you must have been doing something pretty bad, because it is one of the good old boy's good old boy." In general, Janet is "tired of being hit on by men that don't know how to deal with women."

When I asked if sexism has ever made her consider leaving her work, Janet said, "I think there's enough support that I don't really feel that it's affected [me much]." She attributes this support to her board and her staff. In her lobbying work, she also thinks that being a woman is an advantage at times. "[Certain male legislators] look at me as their daughter."

Janet uses a combination of tactics to deal with sexism. "I deal with it by staying away from people who I just don't feel like dealing with, or just plodding ahead with good information on natural resource issues, and that's more how I deal with it, than be confrontational." Although she confronts groups and individuals when she feels she has been bypassed or not given

credit for her accomplishments, she generally avoids blowing up at people whom she feels are sexist. "It's not the battle that I'm there to fight."

Sexism seems to be a recurring theme in Janet Henderson's environmental activism. While volunteering, she was often the only woman involved in a group and was treated disrespectfully by the men involved. "I was the only woman, and they just thought that that was sort of cute, or funny; . . . they'd say that I should bake the cookies." She said that in hindsight, she accepted things that she wouldn't accept now, but did not necessarily have the maturity then to effectively address the problems. "I wanted to be as active as I could, so I just sort of went with the flow, but I definitely felt like I wasn't one of the club. . . . They voted me to be secretary of course, and I did it, whereas now I wouldn't."[65]

One of her responses to these experiences was to organize other women on campus to talk about these issues. "I kept wondering, 'why am I the only woman at these [meetings]?'" She and other women gathered to talk about why they weren't more active in environmental activism. "We all had stories to tell about our experiences that had turned us off, or that had kept us from being more involved."

Her experience working with the Friends of Lolo Peak was particularly trying for her. There were two women and several men involved in an ad hoc group, and "the men tried to just sort of railroad over the two of us women." The women wanted to use a modified form of consensus decision-making while the men wanted to use the more traditional Robert's Rules of Order. Janet said, "I think it's indicative, because part of my arguing for some form of consensus . . . is because of my awareness at that time about how the dynamics tend to happen, with men who are so likely to just dominate a

group and not hear women. That was our way of trying to have more power in that group without fighting at every [decision], and it didn't work. We really got treated like shit." According to Janet, the men were uncooperative and verbally abusive to the women. In this case, Janet's tactic of being assertive backfired -- the women were treated even worse when they tried to stand their ground. The group split along gender lines and did not hold any further meetings.

Janet's experience working for the Clark Fork Coalition was an improvement, although she purposely did not commit much of herself to the organization. She had friendly working relationships with the staff, and felt that she could safely point out their sexist comments. Her problems occurred with some boardmembers. "One past president of the board . . . was a pretty playboy kind of guy -- a womanizer -- and he treated me like that; it was really hard for me. And then later another president was just this dominating, just oh, disrespectful, just sexist man, and I just would fight with him, and that wasn't really cool -- didn't go over well with the whole organization." She finally decided that leaving the environmental movement and working at Women's Place was best for her.

Louisa Willcox has only had one encounter with sexism that adversely affected her work. She had been working at the Teton Science School for a woman with whom she got along very well. When the woman left, the School hired "a male with a very strong ego." Louisa had previously worked with men at NOLS with strong egos, but it was never a problem. "This was a problem in that he was very threatened by me because I was accepted in the community and a lot of people knew me in Jackson." She also feels that he was threatened because he was "sort of incompetent." Louisa finally left her

job because working with this man was so difficult. Initially, she had "taken it personally and hard, but then I realized it was a generic problem. . . . He got rid of all the women eventually in administration positions . . . and the stories were very similar." She said that the women were not trusted, not given credit, and not given the room to creatively do their jobs.[66]

Other than this experience, Louisa has not encountered any experiences where "the mix was such that I couldn't get my job done." Instead, she encounters situations in which she realizes that, because she is a woman, she is not the appropriate person for that situation. Her organization addresses this problem by sending in staff who will be more effective. "The male Mormon establishment in eastern Idaho, they put women down for so long, and they just look at you like, 'who? I mean what?' And so, we hired a guy who's 65, retired engineer, and he's the bad cop, . . . he can say things that are exactly what I would say and he can get away with it." In general, she feels that "my job is not to transform the sexist attitudes of everybody, much as I would like to." Rather, she emphasizes hiring a set of people who can appeal to a variety of constituencies.

Joanne Big Crane encounters sexism and racism, from both Indians and non-Indians, which affects her life and her work. In her questionnaire, she wrote, "Currently, I will encounter subtle 'inferences' as to my abilities and knowledge, (or lack of) as an Indian first, then as a female." One of the more difficult experiences she has had was while working as an intern for the Nature Conservancy. Her supervisor, a non-native who was employed by the Salish Kootenai College on the Reservation, was racist and sexist throughout the internship. "I was pretty much toe to toe with this man on a constant basis, protecting what I saw as tribal rights, tribal sovereignty . . . and then also

on the feminine side. . . . He would make some really bad comments about women, some of them professional women in the forest service."[67]

Joanne's two co-workers were also Indian, one man and one woman. Their supervisor's comments included "how stupid we were, and how drunkenness prevails through everyone, . . . it's just kind of a genetic biological thing that we just have to accept, . . . and with the women, you know, women were good for one thing." The other two individuals did not confront this man because they were concerned about losing their jobs. Joanne, however, had other skills that she could rely on for employment, and was also the middle supervisor, so she had to continuously confront him. "There were several times I'd go home just exhausted." Eventually, Joanne and her two co-workers all quit separately. Dealing with her supervisor was the worst part of an otherwise positive internship for her.

Joanne has had to be very persistent dealing with stubborn cases of sexism. "In my history here, [I] have had to punch men because they would not keep their hands to themselves; they would not keep their mouths shut. And if it gets to that point where [I] keep asking them and telling them, 'I really don't want to hear that, I don't like that,' . . . I felt like that was my only recourse." She finally took a sexual harassment workshop where she learned other techniques.

Joanne said that racism exists within the tribe as well as from non-tribal members. "I'll be treated like I'm just an Indian woman who possibly does not have a brain in her head, that she cannot do anything." She constantly encounters stereotypes about Indian women. "There are some non-Indian men out there who believe those stereotypes that you can just do anything you want, she won't say anything, . . . and when I run into those situations, and I do something about it, it's very shocking to them." Joanne

recognizes racism and sexism when they occur and does not hesitate to try to change it. She does get tired of having to educate people that Indian women can be intelligent.

Joanne mentioned the insidious fear of white supremacist-type hatred that she and other Indians constantly face. "All of the Indians I met in the Spokane Indian community were armed. They were armed because they already knew that something like that was going to begin . . . With Bo Gritz getting this compound together . . . their targets are always the brown-skinned people."

Teresa Erickson's upbringing colored her attitude about men. "We never really thought men were that essential. . . . I never expected much different out of men and so I was never really disappointed when they didn't meet some other expectation." She therefore doesn't emphasize changing sexist attitudes, but rather tries to make the situation work in her favor. "The sexist experiences that I have had primarily are with big corporate slugs. And so my reaction to it is, if you're not paying attention to me, then I will have to do something to get your attention here, and you're not really going to probably like it." She said that getting their attention may take the form of bad press or an indictment.[68]

In general, Teresa feels that, "rather than trying to change everybody's thinking, you can take advantage of it in some situations. . . . If someone comes on to me sexually and I think I can get something from it . . . I'm confessing here . . . I mean I'm not jumping into bed with people . . . but sometimes I'll go along." Teresa clarified this when she talked about how she would handle classism or racism. "People think I'm Indian all the time. . . . Sometimes I think, well, if you think I'm Indian and it scares you because you

think I'm going to slash your tires, go ahead and hold that thought, because I can take that to my advantage. . . . If people think I'm poor, have a background that's less sophisticated, well go ahead and hold that thought, because there's truth to it, and if you're stuck on that thought then it's your problem, not mine."

Teresa feels that her heritage is generally an advantage. "My sister and I look white enough to be accepted by the anglos, and look dark enough to be accepted by either Indian or Mexican constituency. That gives us a lot of mileage in a lot of situations."

Teresa does not really consider herself an avid feminist. "I've devoted so much of my thought to environmentalism and social justice, that I'm really unsophisticated and out of the loop in terms of feminist thought." She feels that she is sometimes too tolerant of sexist jokes, but that "I feel like if I get real righteous and uptight with men who make sexist jokes, I'm not going to get anywhere with them, and I'm certainly not going to convince them that feminism is any better if my reaction is to be hostile." She feels that, because some things are not going to change, she would rather figure out how to get around problems to reach her goal. She prefers proving to men by example that "a woman can be competent, effective, true to her word. . . . [I try to] do my job so well that I'll win their respect and perhaps get them to think differently about all women."

Joan Bird first faced sexism since growing up in a family with traditional gender roles. Then, when Joan was pursuing her doctorate, the zoology department had no female professors and Joan received little support from the faculty while she was in the program, least of all for her dissertation. Joan was denied a teaching position in the department soon after she gave a

seminar on gender problems in the department. "I was told that I was the highest ranking person for it, and it wasn't offered to me. . . . [The faculty decided that my] attitude was not in harmony with the department" and hired a man. When she organized a women's support group for the department, some of the male faculty came to the group and "talked about how they were afraid of going along with us out in the field for fear of being accused of sexual harassment, . . . whereas with male graduate students they didn't have [to have that fear]; and I said, 'that's why we need women!'"[69]

Joan feels that the women in the department put energy into developing and sustaining relationships, while the men were more individualistic, goal-driven, and competitive. "What it felt like the whole time I was in graduate school was that . . . whatever the female equivalent of castration was, I had to undergo [it] psychologically in order to be successful in that department. All the things I considered important as a woman, . . . I had to sever from myself in order to survive and succeed in that environment of competition and production orientation."

At the Nature Conservancy, Joan loved her work and got along well with the staff the first few years. She had a child during that time which made her very tired and unable to work full-time. Then a new director was hired who "was a very controlling and dominating person, and I found his management style real difficult but kept trying to work with it." The director hired two men into Joan's department; one of the job openings she was unaware of until the man was hired. Joan figured that, with her experience and doctorate degree, she could be supervisor of these new employees, and requested a title change to director of protection. At that time she was working 3/4 time and still recovering from having her baby. She was told that she could not be a director unless she was working full time -- so she did.

"And I requested this job name change, which was essentially also a promotion, and was told that the state director did not trust my decision making and that there were other problems with my performance, and he didn't think that I was qualified to do that." This was the first she had heard of this negative view of her work. "By and large, the feedback in the reviews had been outstanding" even when she was exhausted from her pregnancy. The director then hired another man -- a friend of an employee -- into Joan's department. Although Joan was expected to do her work while training these new people, the director did not allow her to give them any of her projects.

"Right before I was told that I had to go back fulltime . . . I got pregnant again, and I'd always thought I would have two children, but I was really tired and I was having problems in my marriage too. And I looked at the situation and . . . just started feeling overwhelmed." She knew how difficult the first pregnancy had been for her, and was beginning to feel the effects of the second pregnancy. "It was clear to me that if I wanted this promotion, and if I wanted a career, that I was not physically capable of having that other child, and at that point in time . . . the career felt more important, and so I had an abortion." Although Joan knows that this was her decision, it is still painful for her, and she is angry that "those were the kinds of decision that women are faced with -- it was not acceptable [to rest and to be with my child] and to be promoted in the organization."

When she began questioning why she was not promoted, "I really came to believe . . . that the reason [the director] did not trust my decision making was because it was not like his." The director encouraged the staff to be very direct in telling him what was on their minds. Although Joan was more comfortable with an indirect style, she made a point of being direct with her thoughts "and then later I would be told I was inappropriate."

Joan filed a gender discrimination grievance based on her experiences in the office, being denied the promotion for which she was qualified, and the backdoor hirings in which it was not possible for a woman to apply. The headquarters of the Conservancy defended all of the state director's actions as legal and in line with personnel policies.

Afterward, Joan realized that "the women in my family ancestry have been pretty oppressed, have not been able to achieve a fraction of what they were capable of because of the oppression by their families and husbands. . . . When I filed the gender discrimination grievance, . . . I was breaking a taboo. . . . I was doing something that women had been afraid of doing for many generations in my family" -- questioning authority.

The lesbian women feel that enduring homophobic jokes and generally having to deal with heterosexism is more difficult than dealing with sexism, because homosexuality is not accepted and supported in our society. One woman said in reference to dealing with the jokes at her workplace, "I didn't ever challenge anybody on it, which is always sort of, I just feel icky. I think I should blast them, [but I] understand the consequences of doing that can be incredible, I mean not fun." Another woman said about an office setting where she had a comfortable working relationship with the men, "I'd speak right up if they said anything homophobic or sexist or whatever . . . give them a hard time about things; but there was sort of an atmosphere where that was okay." One woman feels that it is easier working with all women "where being a lesbian is supposed to be okay, (although) I still always encounter weird stuff."

One of the women feels that, in terms of the experiences of homosexuals in the environmental movement, "gay men might have more

of a problem in the environmental movement than lesbians, because there's kind of this macho image that goes along with the environmental kind of guy, and my guess is that there's a much higher percentage of lesbians in the environmental movement than in the general population for that . . . same reason." She qualified this statement as a gross generalization. She feels that her being a lesbian is not a big concern among the people with whom she works, and that sexism is more of a concern. However, another woman feels that, depending on the staff and the board, being a lesbian is more of a problem working in an environmental group than in other kinds of social change organizations. She feels that it would be a hurdle for many homosexuals to overcome.

How Relationships Affected the Women's Work

During the interviews, I asked the women to talk about their working relationships with women and men. I asked them how these relationships and relationships outside of work, affect their work. Despite a wide range of responses, the importance of relationships to each of the women is apparent. They portray their relationships as important in supporting them and as potentially making or breaking their effectiveness at work and satisfaction with their lives.

Janet Ellis feels that her working relationships with women in the field are "generally pretty positive." For example, she said that lobbying with Chris Kaufmann was "real cooperative and fine and supportive. . . . I [didn't feel] competitive." She also said, "I think I'm closer to some of the female legislators than any of the male legislators." Janet did, however, have problems with a past female staff person in her office who did not share

Janet's work ethic, and put only the minimum amount of time required into the job. Her working relationships with men vary. She has been frustrated with legislators and the press who consult other groups instead of hers even after she has worked closely with them on an issue. The board members of Audubon, especially the president, are valuable to her in terms of supporting her in the job. Janet also credits her husband as a key supportive figure in her life. She has a number of friends that she uses as "sounding boards" to bounce off questions she had about her work.[70]

Joan Bird is very aware of how relationships affect her success and satisfaction in her work. At the University of Montana, she knew how important a supportive atmosphere was for the women in her department, and organized a women's living cooperative. Joan's working relationships with women at the Nature Conservancy varied, especially during her conflict with the state director. "The two women who supported me were both women with advanced degrees and who are very capable, very bright, very serious, ambitious. . . . They both had experienced similar problems with the state director themselves, . . . and they clearly saw my situation and the hiring situation as having been disadvantageous to women." The clerical women in the office however, had spent more time with the men in the office, had not read Joan's grievance, and did not understand Joan's side of the story. "They just knew from this guy that this woman was sort of a crazy woman who was in this ego battle with Brian, the state director." Because of Joan's commitment to women, this lack of support from the women in the office saddened her.[71]

Joan's working relationships with the men in the office varied as well, but were, overall, unsupportive. She obviously did not get along well with

the director. However, she feels that even the men whom she had considered to be friends and allies were not willing to give up their power by siding against the director, and therefore turned away from her. This was "very painful because I considered many of these men to be liberal, progressive . . . but they just didn't get it." Joan was married during her time at the Conservancy, but her husband "was not valuing my differences and was expecting more and more out of me, [and] was very critical."

In contrast, her supervisor at MEIC was exceptionally supportive. "The first thing he would do was ask how things were going for me personally . . . and would sit there and listen, and we'd spend however much time that took for me to get through that stuff, and then we would go on to work."

Louisa Willcox values her relationships, but does not consider those with women any more important than those with men. Her relationships with women at GYC depend on the women's positions in the office. "There are not as many women in leadership positions, so there aren't as many relationships to talk about. . . . There are a lot of support positions and assistants, people coming up through the ranks. We've got a couple women who are here working issues who aren't quite -- it's a different relationship, its not like they're peers." She considers most important her relationships with the women who are doing the same type of work that she is. With Jean-Marie Souvigney, an assistant program director, "it's much more of a relationship that's mutually brain-storming."[72]

With women in similar positions throughout the environmental movement, Louisa said "there's a lot of humor. . . . I think humor is part of a lot of the relationships of women leaders that I know." She said that her relationships with women in the movement are "real supportive. . . .

There's a core group of women in the movement, and I'm not speaking about Montana, I'm speaking across the board, that sort of recognize each other, return each other's phone calls, . . . a core of us who are really pushing the envelope, kind of recognizing each other."

Louisa has generally good relationships with men in her work, which help her be effective. She worked with men at NOLS with "big egos" and never had had a problem. Her supervisor at the Teton Science School was the only man with whom she did have a problem primarily because of his insecurity, she feels. At GYC, she has very good working relationships with the men that work there. "It's not really hierarchical . . . it's more of a problem-solving and realizing that we're all going to make mistakes." Louisa credits her mentors as well as her husband with being continually supportive throughout her work. She said that another kind of relationship she has is with her father, who died when she was twelve. "He was a pretty important character and you always are struggling with that. It comes out in different ways, and it's not totally coherent at this point because it's been so long ago, but it's definitely kind of a driving force."

Teresa Erickson's comments about her working relationships with women were varied. In general, she feels her relationships are "mainly genderless" but that "there is definitely a kinship with women. You can go in the bathroom with a woman and confer. . . . So lots of times [my sister Helen and I] will be meeting in a restaurant and I'll go, 'Helen, bathroom conference!'" Teresa's organization, NPRC, emphasizes giving their constituency the skills to address the issues. Teresa has faith that her constituency can do the work that is necessary. Regarding the women in her constituency, Teresa said, "I relate pretty well to the women. I don't have

kids, so that's one place where I feel kind of like I don't have anything to contribute to the conversation. . . . I relate more to the struggle that women feel when they feel unfeminine because they're leaders -- they've been taught that women don't do things like that." She said that sometimes the sudden empowerment of women can put a strain on their families. "I definitely related to women who start to grow faster than their spouse."[73]

Teresa values all of her working relationships, with both the staff and the people whom NPRC organizes. "When you love people, and when you love your staff, you can still criticize them, you can still push them beyond where they would push themselves, you can drive them to a new level of thought, without driving them away." A significant relationship in Teresa's life is with her husband. "He had been with Northern Plains for twelve years prior to [meeting me], and so he was my mentor, more than just a lover. . . . I really rely very heavily on his feedback. . . . He helped me figure a lot of stuff out, because he had been a boss and a director and raised money and did all that these unique jobs require."

Janet Henderson has thought a lot about her working relationships with women. Having worked in an all-women's environment, she feels that, "when a lot of women feel powerless or different levels of powerlessness in society, they sort of expect other women to be that way too. There's a fear of power and a mindset that 'either you have power and you're bad and an oppressor, or you don't have power and you're good and you're a victim.'" In her work on Lolo Peak, when the women felt as though the men were controlling the group, the women united without competition, which bolstered their feelings of personal security during this experience. "We were like, boom, sisters . . . these guys are mean to us and we got each other." Janet

had a similar experience at a gathering of the Green party when, contrary to the rhetoric of the Greens, all of the keynote speakers were men. The women formed a women's caucus out of their frustration. Janet feels that "a really interesting thing happens when women work together; they either bond together out of . . . oppression . . . or you're individual, strong women. . . . I think it's hard to bring those two together for a lot of women." In fact, one of Janet's struggles in working with all women has been that, "I didn't see power as a bad thing. I wanted some!"[74]

At Women's Place, Janet's relationships have varied. "I have felt that community sense, that connected close working relationship as with women working together; I [have also] had some strong, positive, really dynamic, mutually enhancing and energizing working relationships with women . . . usually those relationships have an element of competition in them. . . . It's kind of a healthy competition, or sometimes there's an edge to it."

Janet's difficult working relationships with men in the groups for which she volunteered damaged her feelings of effectiveness as well as affecting her choice in career paths. Because of these experiences "most of me got checked at the door" when she worked at the Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Coalition. "It wasn't completely impersonal, we knew some things about each other's lives and some shared humor," but her involvement was more limited and businesslike, unlike her job at Women's Place where she puts her whole self into her job and has had a large variety of relationships.

Outside of her work, Janet's closest long-term woman friend gives Janet "really strong consistent feedback and has really good insights and has really been supportive of me." Janet was also previously "married to a man who was very supportive when I was really struggling with all this stuff . . .

really supportive of who I was whatever that meant -- always behind me and cheering me on, that was really important."

Chris Kaufmann has also varied experiences working with women. Her first job out of graduate school was with Women's Opportunity Resource and Development (WORD) in Missoula. Although the organization is made up of all women, "I never felt very empowered at WORD, and there were some strong personalities running that place." She felt more empowered when she moved to Helena and began working for MEIC. Her relationships with women in the legislature and with other female lobbyists were definitely positive. She feels that the women lobbyists cooperated well with each other. When Northern Plains Resource Council sent a woman to lobby, "I had a lot different relationship with Northern Plains than I did when they had male lobbyists up there. . . . I felt like I could work with [her]."[75]

Chris generally described her working relationships with women as cooperative, supportive and non-competitive, and said that she feels more comfortable working with women than with men. "I think I kind of set it up to work at the relationships with women . . . and I blow men off a bit more." Chris Kaufmann did, however, have a positive relationship with the male director of MEIC. "We actually made a good team, I thought, because we had very different styles -- he was much more confrontative."

Chris feels supported by many outside of her work, including her past boss at MEIC. "He and Pam [his partner] are certainly people I can count on to understand where I am about." The people at the Methodist Church are also very supportive of her work.

Doris Milner generally doesn't consider the gender of the people with whom she works; her focus is on completing the job. She mentioned a few women that came to mind with whom she has had mutually supportive relationships driven by a common goal. One of these women was Liz Smith who was Arnold Bolle's editor. "We were different people. . . . I would write some letters, and she would edit, and the only thing that would be left when I got it back was 'Very Truly Yours'! But I understood and she was very good." Doris compliments the women whom she encounters today in the movement. "A lot of the younger women I have nothing but admiration for. And they're not shrill or aggressive, they just know their business, and I'm impressed by it."[76]

Doris' supportive relationships with her husband and family were very important while she was working to save the Selway. "This was the kid's country too, they had learned to hike and swim and fish and camp, and the very idea that anything was going to happen to that was a personal thing with them too, . . . so I had a support system here from everybody." Her husband "was always a support system because he loved that country too; and just knowing that you're supported is a very good thing." The support that Doris receives from her family is crucial in her continued work and passion for the area.

Joanne Big Crane's working relationships with women are based on support and mutual respect, in part from working together in a patriarchal setting, in which she feels the women have to work twice as hard as men to be taken seriously. "I work with one of the range technicians who's a woman, and it's been really interesting to watch both of our places and positions within that arm of the organization, because every once in a while

it gets very difficult because we're not seen as very strong, or . . . very smart." She said that they were also sometimes seen as a threat "because it's the good old boys. . . . And when they're all together they don't have to worry about their wives getting mad, or their girlfriends getting mad because they're working with a woman technician. . . . We have had to work really hard, but . . . subtly . . . so we're not giving up something of ourselves, . . . to show everyone that we're not a threat."[77]

Joanne has also had unsupportive relationships with women. One woman in the tribal organization waged a campaign to discredit Joanne because, Joanne believes, she was threatened by Joanne's position and expertise within the tribal organization. However, with most women, she does not feel a sense of hierarchy or competition, but just a mutual respect for each others skills and expertise. "Many of the women professionals that I had met outside of the tribal organization were very self-assured, so . . . I never received that feeling that I was an upstart, or . . . a threat, and that they had to use their position to coerce me. . . . They were always very open and very willing to listen." Joanne said, "A lot of women who have been so supportive, and who are just so energetic, . . . are the ones who help me network. . . . Being able to network . . . makes me feel real positive, real energetic." Regarding a male Forest Service employee who unquestioningly gave her information that helped with her work, she said "It's a joy to be able to work with someone who is so competent."

Joanne's tribal community is important to her, despite her somewhat troubling relationship with it. "I think that everything I work for is for my tribal community, even though a lot of times they treat me pretty shabbily. . . . Finding that part of the community [in which] I don't always have to answer to someone or I'm not always being attacked wears at me." She discussed

how traditional Salish tribal culture was communal. "We all depended on each other . . . and issues were dealt with differently, not this backbiting stuff you know."

Joanne said that she tends to be somewhat of a loner. She is on her family's "black list", so "what I see as my personal community is just made up of friends and my children" to whom she is very close. She tried to provide her children -- now ages 16, 19, and 21 -- exposure to a wide range of people while they were growing up, especially people "who were not abusive drinkers, who were very bright, who were very intelligent, who were always doing things, who were very community minded, or very academic minded, or very artistic. . . . I've been very fortunate to have friends who would treat my children as miniature adults." In this way, she hoped to raise her kids out of the paradigm that Indians have inherited. "So I'm fortunate because I have three kids who are not drinkers who are not partiers, they're not wild."

These women have worked in jobs that require many different skills and areas of knowledge to be successful. The women do not necessarily think of their strengths as being task-oriented. Most of the women feel that their strengths lie in the areas of professional knowledge, the ability to think holistically and have broad-based skills, and the ability to work effectively with other people -- building bridges between dissimilar groups, appealing to many constituencies, working with other's strengths, and having love for coworkers and constituents.

Despite their levels of skill and expertise, all but one of the women have encountered sexism and other discrimination. The "old boys club" was mentioned several times as an entity that the women feel has caused them to be by-passed for job-placement, prevented from speaking, or prevented from

receiving information or credit that they deserve. Janet Ellis' description of the "club" as a "wall" that one runs into where being a woman is a disadvantage, matches most of the women's experiences.

Most of the women encounter discrimination in the form of not being acknowledged for their expertise or contributions. Many of them have also encountered blatantly disrespectful treatment. They feel that being the only woman in a given setting is difficult and isolating. State agencies and the political arena were mentioned as being particularly sexist.

Some common themes arose in how the women deal with these experiences. Many women feel that the best approach is to be consistent and knowledgeable, "plug away" at their work, and show by example that women deserve an equal place in the environmental movement. Some of the women have actively organized or networked with other women to gain support and power. Most of the women at some point have used confrontation to address the "isms," with varying degrees of success. Some have eventually responded by emotionally withdrawing, leaving their jobs, or leaving the movement entirely.

In the face of discrimination and the challenges of their everyday work, the women find many sources of empowerment. Reflecting on their past successes is empowering for many of the women. Gaining recognition, appreciation, and respect from others is also very important. Some of the women mentioned that discovering their voice or personal power, or having self-knowledge is very empowering. Other sources of empowerment include spirituality, which affirms the worth of both men and women; and separatism, which provides an opportunity for growth in an atmosphere free of potential discrimination.

Relationships were mentioned by all of the women as being important to their feeling empowered. Their empowering relationships take the form of supportive individual relationships, synergy among the members of a group, and the success of such a group. Seeing and helping other people succeed is empowering for many of the women.

Personal relationships are crucial for all of the women. For the most part, their relationships with other women are supportive, mutually respectful, and filled with humor. Some of the women mentioned that their relationships are better with women who are their peers in terms of professional position. The women's families are also very important to them. Most of the women have supportive husbands, partners, and families who helped them to succeed. When such relationships are unsupportive, it is especially troubling for the women.

VI. Perspectives

Out of their experiences, each woman has arrived at specific ideas of what the most pressing environmental problems are, how they should be approached, what hindrances women in the environmental movement face, and what women can do to be most effective in their environmental activism. They also have perspectives on urgent issues of discrimination, the definition of leadership, and how they maintain their equilibrium through difficult times. The questions that I asked to learn the women's perspectives on these issues are listed below, followed by the women's responses.

•*What do you feel are the most pressing environmental problems that we face today?*

Chris Kaufmann feels that the depletion of forest resources and especially water resources is the most pressing environmental issue. But she also feels that population is a "big one" for her, although she is wary of the issue being framed as "'these third world women need to quit having babies.' I think that's really missing the issue; . . . it's the babies in the Western world that need to not be born in terms of resource use." She feels that the environmental movement "has really stayed away from population issues in the last decade, and I think because it's too difficult for them to deal with, because it again touches on the whole human stuff a little more clearly, as well as the race stuff."[78]

Doris Milner also thinks population pressure is "numero uno." She recently saw a new magazine from an organization whose goal is to work "'so

that the wild areas will be continuous, the rivers will run clean,' and blah blah blah. Not a single word about population. You don't control that you can't do anything! . . . Everything stems from that."[79]

Janet Ellis answered this question from a statewide perspective. "The issue that we work the most on and gets our memberships most excited is wildlife habitat, and the way we approach that [is] by trying to protect wetlands."[80]

When I asked Janet Henderson this question, she said, "Too hard . . . too many pressing ones, I can't prioritize them!"[81]

Joan Bird feels that "the most pressing environmental problem is in people's minds. . . . For us to really understand how to solve these environmental problems I think we need to understand who we are in a different way, . . . that consciousness which sees the whole world as an interconnected web. . . . We've gotten into such polarities from this whole adversarial process, that people just get entrenched in their positions, and the only way to really lift out of that is with more compassion. So I guess I would say what feels to me like the most pressing environmental problem is a lack of compassion."[82]

Joanne Big Crane feels that the most pressing environmental problem is "too many people taking pot shots at each other. . . . I think sometimes it's really easy for someone who doesn't know much about another organization to say what they're doing wrong, when they don't know how things are working from the inside out." She encounters this in her work when people in one division will "hammer on someone else in another division." Someone may attack her for not doing her job without realizing that she often has her hands tied by cultural, political or legal concerns.[83]

Teresa Erickson said, "just think about your basic drive for life, it's the drive to breathe, the drive for thirst, for hunger so, air pollution and water pollution." Although Billings has the worst record in the country for sulfur dioxide air pollution because of the refineries, Teresa feels that "for Montana it's water pollution. And 87 percent of our rural communities rely on groundwater for their drinking water, and yet, we do oil and gas development, we bury our garbage in the ground, we have agricultural chemicals . . . we're slowly poisoning ourselves to death." She spoke about the numbers of people with whom NPRC works who have cancer. There are so many that "they carpool to Miles City for radiation treatments. I mean they carpool, . . . and a lot of people suspect that it's in their water."[84]

• *How would you handle the environmental problems that you feel are important if you were in charge and able to approach them the way you wanted to?*

Doris Milner does not know how she would handle the problem of overpopulation. "You're asking me what even the sages don't know?! . . . It's a very fundamental right that no amount of education . . . that I can see is going to turn it around, but I don't know." She admits that addressing population issues is missing in the environmental movement, but is not sure how to address it. "We didn't; that wasn't part of our scene."[85]

Janet Ellis feels that the Endangered Species Act is a critical piece in her work for habitat and other issues that she feels are important, and agreed with the way the Act is being modified because it fits Montana's needs - "trying to figure out ways where you can realistically come up with ecosystems approaches to protection." In approaching environmental problems in general, she would be "more than interested in sitting down with people that

are reasonable from different constituencies to see if there is some common ground." She had an experience with this when she worked with forest industry representatives and Trout Unlimited to come up with a solution on streamside management zones. Overall, she said "I never thought about being czar, and so I'm in Montana working."[86]

Janet Henderson said, "I would take a non-reactive, or at least a non-reactionary approach to environmental problems. And I used to be a pretty staunch advocate of reactionary environmental politics, but now I think that that isn't very effective at all." She said she would prefer to take an open-minded approach, listening to all sides and maintain open lines of communication about the issues. "Often that doesn't happen, and so stuff stays in the realm of the fighting and doesn't really get anywhere." She is not sure how much she would be willing to compromise but she feels that, for the long haul, it is more effective to bring people together and try to minimize differences. "I think we have to just have a deeper discussion . . . and that means being open-minded, not just reactionary about saving the environment."[87]

Joan Bird thoughts are similar to Janet Henderson's. "I just think we're never going to settle this stuff as long as we keep in polarities, and I think that's part of women's way, is to be able to understand different sides of a situation, to be really able to empathize with those loggers who are losing their jobs and those miners who don't know what's going to happen to them, and to be rational about this and work on trying to find solutions for everybody." She feels that this approach is currently missing in the environmental movement, but that some organizations are working on sustainability and partnerships. If she were to organize a group to address environmental problems it would "need to [have] a structure which is not

hierarchical, [where] everybody comes with that openness of realizing that I have a point of view, but it's not necessarily better or more right than everybody else's." She feels it would be important to have people with "a lot of initiative, [who] are pretty healthy individuals, and [who] have this commitment and openheartedness about what they're trying to do; a spiritual element is probably real important." She also feels that having people trained in conflict management would be crucial.[88]

Louisa Willcox seems comfortable with how she currently handles the issues that GYC addresses. She commented on the type of approach she prefers. "Women, I think, as a rule, and this is a horrible generalization, are more consensus-builder types, and they make decisions by consensus. . . . I almost know of no situation where a woman in the movement in a leadership position has gone off and done something completely on their own or had their organization do that, where other groups went, 'What? You did what?' But this happens all the time. What women are more likely to do, [we] set up the strategy session, we bring in everybody and their uncle that has an interest in this, throw all the issues out on the table and say, 'Who wants to work together on this?' . . . and that's much more the logic of what I think of sort of a feminine mentality will do in a problem-solving sense."[89]

Teresa Erickson said that her preferred method is to bring opposing sides together and encourage them to consider who their real enemies are. "There is so much agriculture bashing that goes on in the environmental publications and there is so much environmental bashing that goes on in the ag publications. . . . It's the wrong culprit here, folks. Agriculture is not the enemy, and environmentalists are not the enemy to agriculture, and meanwhile the corporations are laughing all the way to the bank; the wise use movement just feeds that." Teresa would like to see more collaboration

on the issues. "One of the things we want to do is host some national environmental lobbyists, on a ranch, particularly like during calving season or lambing season or something real intense, where they can develop a personal relationship with the farmer or rancher; . . . and get some wool grower, stock grower types to view a clearcut, or an overgrazed area." She feels that people need to work together, "because if we're all together, we could kick ass all day and night."[90]

One of Joanne Big Crane's main frustrations with the environmental movement is the over-used excuse of a lack of money to do what needs to be done. She feels that, whether addressing environmental, social, or cultural issues, people need to come together in the community, have a vision of what they want, and actively work toward that goal. "Let's not look for a grant to do a study of the problem, let's just get together with my friend Joe's pickup and let's go pick up garbage in the neighborhood, that type of thing. . . . Why do we always have to depend on someone else with the big bucks out there? . . . We live here, we should do it."[91]

Chris Kaufmann said that, if in charge, she would take a holistic approach to solving environmental problems and that environmental groups could be more effective if they would "join forces with the rest of the progressive movement here and kind of look at the human environment as a piece of the natural environment." She realizes that no one has time to work on all issues, but she faults environmental groups for "fundamentally not quite understanding that connection." She feels that they need to have the attitude that "they are involved in a progressive movement for a better world as opposed to just a better natural environment." She feels that the Christian Right is a common enemy to the progressive movement, and that it is especially important to share information among groups that don't often

do so, such as human rights and environmental groups. "Ideally there would be a little bit more exchange of ideas from outside of your immediate group. . . I think [it] would be helpful to have some kind of round tables more often between environmental groups, and exchange of ideas and going to conferences and that sort of thing." Chris is excited about the Environmental Justice movement that is starting in Montana, and would like to see a group in Montana make that their mission.[92]

• *What do you feel are the hindrances to women in the environmental movement? What are the supports?*

Janet Ellis feels that a hindrance to women working on wilderness issues is that "wilderness is very male dominated . . . maybe that's why I don't particularly miss being involved in it." She also said that having to cope with sexism was a disadvantage for women. "I wish we wouldn't have to deal with that kind of thing and I guess we will for a long time, but I guess we're making slow progress." Janet also mentioned the feeling of isolation that some women experience, "especially within the agencies like [Montana Department of] Fish Wildlife and Parks," and that there is not a critical mass of women in those agencies to confront the "Old Boys Club." Janet feels, however, that the small number of women also creates a supportive atmosphere. "There aren't that many women in the environmental community, so there is somewhat of a network" of support. She found this support encouraging.[93]

Janet Henderson agrees that "it's a hindrance that there aren't more women involved in the movement, and that's just a big one, because if there were, it would be a different movement, and other hindrances wouldn't be there." She concurs with Janet Ellis' view that "some aspects of it have this

macho element that I think is a hindrance, guys who are into wilderness and into nature, sort of macho, like Earth First!." She feels that the link between environmental and women's issues needs to be acknowledged. "The environmental movement in general doesn't recognize enough the link between how women have been treated and how the environment has been treated, and I think that if that was more acknowledged and understood, that women could be more influential, active part of the environmental movement."[94]

Janet then said that these hindrances could also serve as supports. She emphasized that she does not think that women are closer to nature, "but I think that, because women have been associated with nature by men, and because they've been oppressed by men in the same way, . . . I think it's the way things have been perceived, . . . I think that can be used and has been used as an advantage by women being involved in the environmental movement." Another support is that "there are increasing numbers of men in the environmental movement who are supportive of women being involved and . . . are trying to overcome [sexism] themselves."

Joan feels that the greatest hindrances to women are "just all the difficulties of working in a system which is very white male, working in the patriarchy . . . how it affects everything -- government levels and working with agencies and bureaucracies down to the non-profits." She generally sees women "getting tripped up -- it can be talked about as a self esteem or self worth issue -- [but] one of the things that happens is right at about puberty, there begins to be a gap in self esteem or self worth feelings between boys and girls. Girls start lagging behind . . . . I think that the culture creates that because of the way it values men over women."[95]

But Joan also believes that "there are opportunities out there for women and there is getting to be stronger legal support and there are getting to be more women who are aware of the problems, . . . stronger awareness around these issues of control. . . . There are a lot of people who are beginning to understand problems of . . . trying to operate in an adversarial system versus trying to move to a more community-relational system."

Louisa sees the hindrances to women as "mainly hiring procedures. I think that women need a break, I think sometimes they are there, but aren't recognized for being there. They need a break so somebody can see whether or not they're good. . . . And the top of the environmental movement is filled with people in their middle age who are going to be there for a while."[96]

Teresa initially answered this question by saying "I don't think there are any hindrances . . . because I think of the environmental movement as being women. Maybe the national groups have more men, but certainly the local ones [have] a pile of women involved." She then said that the biggest hindrance to women's involvement in environmental activism is the difficulty of "[working] hard and long hours because you have kids." She emphasized the importance of having "a support system that can handle your kids; that's when you really have the ability to develop a leader well." She said, "I'd be careful saying this, because I don't want to say kids are the main hindrance, but . . . in order for you to have a family, that's your first priority. It's got to be your first priority."[97]

However, she also feels that being a mother can be an advantage. "A lot of times women are motivated because of their kids. And you know, mother's drive is, phew, powerful, extremely powerful, when people get up and testify about the reason they're there is because they want their kids to have a livable environment . . . who can fight with that kind of statement?"

She also feels that now, "people are making up for lost time. . . . You may have a really qualified competent white male and you just know that they're really not going to be as effective, because what you need is a female or a minority. . . . And you even get away with being emotional. . . . I've seen a lot of men just on the verge of tears and they couldn't get away with it, whereas a woman, you know, people almost expect you to have emotion."

Joanne Big Crane feels that the hindrances to women include "trying to deal with the [feminist] issues too much, trying to convince the guys that we can do it . . . always having to prove something." She and her female co-worker "have identified the problems and the issues and just say, okay, that's what it is, but we've got a job to do, and we're just going to go do it."[98]

Chris Kaufmann feels that the hindrances to women's involvement "relate to just how sexism plays in the whole culture and from the time that you go to grade school, before that and on up, that you are taught not really to believe that you have answers and that you can solve problems creatively and that your own voice can be powerful." In addition to this, she feels that "there's not enough women, and this relates of course in decision-making -- we need a president . . . a woman in a position of decision-making power and authority that of course will have to be perfect; . . . but I think that when young girls see more women in those positions, things are going to change in the environmental movement."[99]

What Chris sees as the supports to women include that "women have a different perspective on environmental issues than men . . . that you proceed ahead in the evolution of the planet by cooperating with it instead of winning or beating it, and where I know that men in the environmental movement would never claim that that's their perspective." She feels that women "bring in more kinds of information" to a problem, rather then

"dissecting things to get at the root of it" as men do. Chris feels that this is a strength that women bring to any area of work. As far as where women can find support, Chris feels that "particularly women in the reproductive health area have a lot to offer women in other progressive movements, because I think they've done it without men more, and have kind of felt that power . . . [without] having had to kind of do the sexism battle quite as much."

Doris Milner couldn't think of any hindrances to women, but feels that with "background . . . and training and a desire to do something," women can probably accomplish their goals. She feels that the environmental movement has evolved from being an all-male field, "just as women have evolved in other fields. [Now], women are educated and I think that has had a great deal to do with it." She gave the example of Hillary Clinton. "The women have accepted Hillary Clinton, and I don't think that would have been true ten years ago. . . . Women are respecting her, and the men too! . . . She makes an effort to be very well informed and I think her manner is good, her manner of being with people, . . . she sticks to the problem. . . . She's not talking about Hillary Clinton, she's talking about the health thing."[100]

• *What issues regarding sexism, classism, and racism are so pressing that they need to be addressed now?*

Chris Kaufmann feels that racism, sexism, and classism are all "huge problems for the environmental movement" and that "women in the environmental movement are not taken seriously." She feels that there are plenty of women involved, and doing the work, but that the men usually get the credit and the limelight. Chris mentioned in her initial questionnaire response that she thought that men in the environmental movement were especially sexist. Her theory of why this may be so is, "Well part of it is we

expect more out of them because we think they have a consciousness about oppression . . . we expect them to get it and they don't. . . . They are harder to count on, because they know the rhetoric; they wouldn't come out and say these sexist things in front of women but you know they say them to each other, I'm convinced of that."[101]

Chris also feels that an extremely pressing issue is that of "dumping in sort of a generic sense: dumping on poor people both in terms of actually locating our nasty stuff where they live and figuring out that we can put it there because they have no political power, as well as sort of verbally and emotionally dumping on them for having too many babies and not being able to get their shit together and ending up in jail all the time. . . . I'm not saying the environmentalists are doing that; I think the world is doing that, and I think the environmental movement needs to be more responsive and sensitive."

Janet Henderson said jokingly, "What we can do now is have a large exodus of men out of the environmental movement and replace them with women, sort of balance things out, I think that would be really great." Janet does feel that there is an imbalance, and that an influx of women would greatly improve the movement. "I can't think of anything that could be done to change things that isn't a gradual thing, that comes with understanding and enlightenment."[102]

Joanne Big Crane feels that the most pressing issue is that "while we're all talking, things are happening, and we can't keep talking, we've got to start doing." She reiterated her feeling of frustration with the lack of action in the movement. "Let's get beyond the writing articles, writing papers; let's get down there and do some real work, organize community-wise. Let's start

really educating the kids out there, let's not talk about building more curriculum. . . . Speed it up a little bit."[103]

Joanne's frustration extends to addressing women's issues in environmental work. "Sometimes when it's women and the environment, there seems to be more dialogue about feminist issues rather than about environment. . . . Certain times with non-tribal organizations, there seems to be too much beating a dead horse with certain issues; that I think would tend to go into like feminist activities. . . . We should just get beyond that, . . . really [get] down and do some work . . . get down to something beyond the rhetoric."

Regarding Native American women and environmental issues, she said, "we need to somewhere get more educated and somehow . . . change the view of everyone to stop thinking of us as quaint. . . . Native women aren't really taken that seriously, you know, unless we have gray hair. The younger ones have a real hard time of it."

• *How do you think women can be most effective at working for the environment, creating change, etc.? What is your advice to women?:*

Chris Kaufmann feels that, to be effective activists, women have to "understand feminism and this backlash against feminism. . . . This kind of rejection of [feminists] as being extremists I think is very unfortunate." She also feels that "women today in environmental movement are too much these earth mother types. . . . If they would understand and not be ashamed of both a feminist label and particularly the feminist philosophy and analysis of sexism, I think that the power of women and the ability of women to work in that movement would be tremendously increased." She feels that there is a need for "some feminist writing in the environmental field." She is concerned that "there was this kind of rejection of scientific method which I

happen to be trained in. . . . I think it has its limitation -- the biggest one being is that it thinks it's the only one. . . . There's too much of a rejection of scientific method as ever having anything valid, and then . . . maybe [with] the more scientifically-minded women, too much rejection of feminism." She feels that women need to embrace feminism and keep working to understand what it means and how it can help the environmental movement.[104]

Doris Milner recommends "acquiring skills of social intercourse, the skills of talking to people, and bringing a point to them without antagonizing them." She feels it is important for women, "to inform themselves correctly, really know what you're talking about. And not be shrill." She emphasizes the importance of realizing that "It isn't a person against another person, it's an idea that we're trying to talk about. That's very important. Present the facts as you have found them, in a clear way." She feels that women who know their facts and are committed are more effective because "I think women who have things to do and think about are not as apt to be snippy . . . they aren't thinking about themselves personally."[105]

Janet Ellis' primary advice for women entering the movement is to be "good, solid workers." She also feels that it helps to take a "more human approach to solving problems. If I know a person I'll be more apt to ask them [their view on an issues]." For example, she won't write off the Wood Products Industry if she knows a person within the industry that she can consult. "It's because of the personal relationships and not just bludgeoning my way through and dismissing the whole industry [that helps me] to tie people together to work out solutions." She feels that these diplomacy skills are "something that I think we can add to the whole movement."

Janet Henderson's advice has to do with a woman's personal strength. "To not believe that she's powerless even if she feels that way . . . to just push past that and have a lot of confidence about herself, even as she runs into oppressive stuff; either fight it or ignore it, whatever works." She thinks it's best to have "a little bit of a detached attitude to those experiences of sexism, so that we cannot get our energy sucked by them." She feels that women need to be "really assertive about getting into positions of power in the movement . . . making themselves be taken seriously, valued a lot and respected as active agents of environmental change." She feels that it is important to strike a balance of being aware of sexist problems yet not being bogged down by them.[106]

Joan Bird's advice is to "have a very good personal support system, either a partner who really values you and gives you lots of support and recognition, and appreciation, or a group of people that can do that for you." She feels that is is important that women understand "a little bit about male-female differences," and for women not to be naive. "It's real easy to believe that there's no discrimination out there, to want to believe that, and then when it manifests they just go through this horrible deflowering." She urges women to "hear stories, be aware that it's still out there." She also feels that having mentors is important. She refers to a piece of research that said "the people who are the most successful are the ones who have had, somewhere along the way, a close mentoring relationship -- somebody who was older, who was already successful in their career, who knew that they were valuable, who knew that they were worthwhile, and who had a close relationship with them to encourage them and teach them and help them find their way along. So I would encourage women to look for that. And it wouldn't necessarily have to be in a woman."[107]

Louisa recommends that women insist on consensus building as a model. "Where the movement gets into trouble is when groups go off and do things that are counter-productive to what other groups are doing, and while there may be irrecoverable differences in how people approach issues, a lot of times, to the extent we can solve them, we need to." She also recommends "internalizing something and [raising the question] 'does this make sense?' . . . My problem-solving model is really talking things through with the best brains that you can find, because you never have the right mix of elements to effectively game plan, and you're always changing it as you go along." In general, she said, "just get in there and keep trying, find a style that works, and try to build consensus, because the environmental movement in Montana has never been as rife as it is right now with fractured male egos and groups just ripping each other up. It's bad, and if you notice, it's not women doing this for the most part. It's just really ripping a lot of people up around here."[108]

Teresa feels that, although men tend to be more logical and analytical, which she feels is important in this type of work, "I think a lot of this work ultimately comes down to what you feel in your gut. Trust what your gut tells you, trust what your intuition tells you, trust what your hunches are, they're there for a reason. . . . Trust it especially when it bumps up against your logical analysis; that's when I think intuition causes all this anxiety. . . . When they conflict, I would say to a woman, trust it, because it's probably right. She also said to "be proud of being a woman, be proud of the differences between men and women, that women are nurturers and caregivers, that's great, that's good, that's important, that's needed in the environmental movement, and don't try and be a man." She also warns, "don't give [a woman] credence she doesn't deserve just by virtue of being a

woman. . . . I've been at meetings where the corporate thug was a woman . . . that doesn't make any difference at all, she is as capable of being an asshole as men are, and don't forget that."[109]

Teresa also said "Have fun at it. . . . Women tend to be a little more playful, a little bit more willing to not be so egotistical, and that's great, it makes this work fun, if you're playful, and you're willing to be kind to people. . . . Don't be ashamed if you love the people that you work with or that you love land; don't ever apologized for being emotional, that's okay . . . it makes it human; . . . sometimes [if you're] clear about your emotions and your values, they know you know something they don't."

Joanne Big Crane feels that women can be most effective by "working on themselves, and getting really clear, and stop attacking each other, and really work together because . . . it's all one part of the same thing. My work isn't really separated from the rest of my life. . . . I [see] myself as participating in a whole life, not just one portion of it." She also expanded on her thoughts on women's hindrances by advising that the best thing is "not getting too radical, not hanging onto the feminist stuff too tightly. . . . We go on overkill on some things, . . . we want to have equality but we go way over too far. . . . I think everyone needs to be more centered. . . . We can talk and talk and talk, but that's not going to do anything. Walk your talk."[110]

• *What will the next generation of women encounter? Are things getting better or worse? Who will be their role models?*

Chris Kaufmann feels that "things will get better for women. . . . There will come some strong powerful woman that's in a decision-making position in government" that will help bring women along. "I'm looking for . . . a woman or a bunch of women that gain some political power in the decision-

making places that are not there because they've kissed ass to men." On a different vein, she said, "I keep trying to imagine if there's going to be some kind of catastrophic event that's going to help us all out too, . . . God reveals herself!" Chris thinks that women's voices are becoming more prevalent in the environmental movement "I think we'll win, and I wouldn't be doing the work if I didn't think that."[111]

Doris Milner feels that "women are doing pretty well for themselves" and talked a bit about role models. "The Attorney General Reno . . . I think she commands respect, and Shalala, and Dr. Elders." She feels that the number of women in the field is definitely increasing. "It's the number and quality. . . . It's certainly picking up in the science fields . . . women realize now that they can go out and make a good living and also have families; it's not as easy [however]."[112]

Janet Ellis also feels that conditions are improving for women in the environmental field. She puts some faith in women legislators who "seem to be a lot more compassionate on social issues. . . . I just think the more balanced [we get, the more progress we'll make] in Montana where we're definitely in the minority." She feels that "we have quite a ways to go, but it's building and I guess I've seen progress just in Montana legislature, a lot more representatives." In terms of role models, "I think Dorothy Bradley has been a good role model, and Emily Swanson (Bozeman) and Vivian Brooke (Missoula) as far as legislators go. . . . It's just so nice to get more women in the Senate in Congress, I'm so excited about that." She mentioned California's two female senators, as well as Carol Browner and Molly Beatty. "I hope there's a woman who runs for president someday while I can vote."[113]

Janet Henderson feels that the environmental movement has improved since she left and that she may try working within the movement again. Part of this is because "my own personal journey has really strengthened my sense of myself . . . and I think that the environmental movement is changing a lot in recent years. Just locally there are a lot more women involved, and environmental activists, it's amazing to me. Those few things . . . might make it workable for me."[114]

Joan Bird feels that things are getting better. "Maybe not so much because all the old players and the old system is changing, but more of the younger people are less caught up in these sexist struggles . . . there's been a lot of stuff going on about that for a long time, and seems like that's really paved the way for each younger generation of women to feel a little more stronger in themselves and less bogged down by those problems . . . younger women now . . . aren't as affected by sexism as women before them, and I think that continues to happen, and that's encouraging and exciting."[115]

• *What keeps you going when times are especially difficult?*

Chris Kaufmann made no hesitation in answering this question. "Oh, that I can always quit. . . . That I don't have to take this unless I don't want to, . . . that this thing is a whole lot bigger than me, and that there are a lot of good people out there that are trying to make it work, and if I need to take off for a year, things move on." She also mentioned the importance of her support network believing in her. She said that she can "survive on nothing. . . . I'm doing the work because I believe in it and I want to do it, rather than to pay bills."[116]

Doris Milner said that "I guess if you care about something, you keep at it and that's the only way to go, especially if it's not a thing that's just for you,

you're part of society, if you believe in it and believe that others will enjoy it in the years to come . . . it's just like being a parent. You can get awful tired of being a parent, but there's a long view of this."[117]

Janet Ellis' relationship with her spouse is one thing that keeps her going when things get tough. Also, "the support from staff, and being able to decide to call time out and get away from it for a while, it's usually hours rather than days, so that you can put things in perspective again."[118]

Teresa said that humor keeps her going during tough times, "a twisted kind of humor. . . . As a coalition staff we tend to just make fun of [frustrating times]. That helps. . . . I look forward to lunch more than any other time here in the office because we have such a good time. We'll totally ridicule or make fun of the sensitive awful things just to keep our spirits up. Humor is very powerful. Talking things out too."[119]

- *How do you define leadership?*

Doris said that to be a leader, "You need to know what your purpose is, why are you the leader. . . . And you have to be somewhat in sync with your membership and your board. And you have to listen to how they feel and really consider what they're saying. Leadership is trying to get the best out of people and that's very important, not try to be the Queen of the May all the time."[120]

Janet Ellis said, "They come in so many shapes and sizes in our organization. Basically someone willing to be in the lead of a grassroots effort, be able to lead and to network; leaders who try to do everything themselves get a lot done but get burned out."[121]

Joan Bird has come to believe that "Leadership is about acting in a way that models high ideals, and also a leader is someone who can empower

someone to do their best -- to model the type of behavior that they want to see in people that are supervised but also provide the encouragement, provide the support, provide whatever people need in order to feel good about themselves and be able to do their best."[122]

Chris Kaufmann said, "A leader is someone who knows how to make room for people's voices to be heard, knows how to hear everybody's input and then is not afraid to make a decision after gathering it all. But the key to leading is knowing how to let all the opinions be heard."[123]

Teresa said that leaders are "people who do the work. . . . Leaders are people who show up, who do have the ideas but carry out the ideas, want a strong membership base and then make it happen, and also people who have a vision and are willing to act on that vision."[124]

The women brought out many perspectives on the environmental movement. Population and water quality in Montana were both brought up by the women as pressing environmental problems. Infighting and polarities within the environmental movement -- too many people spending too much time criticizing rather than working with one another -- are also seen as serious problems threatening the environment.

Most of the women said that, in response to this infighting, they would take a holistic, consensus-building approach to solving environmental problems, and would consider social concerns in addition to purely environmental ones. They said that, rather than being reactive and fighting, they would prefer to sit down with diverse interests, listen to everyone's views, and collectively work out how to solve problems. One woman said that she would propose action instead of studies as solutions to problems.

The women's views of leadership reflects these feelings. Their

definitions of leadership include the practice of listening to others and bringing out other's strengths as well as modeling high ideals and doing the work. Sharing power seems to be the common theme brought out by all of them. They feel that this is not done enough in the environmental movement, especially by most men who are often in leadership positions.

The women feel that a hindrance to women in environmental activism is having to deal with sexism throughout their lives. They also feel that women's involvement is hampered by the small numbers of women in the movement, and that many women feel isolated. The pressures of raising a family are also seen as a potential difficulty for female environmental activists. Hiring procedures are seen as a deterrent to women entering the movement. However, the women do feel that, in general, things are improving for women in the environmental field. More women are in leadership positions and are serving as role models for younger women; the number of women environmental activists is increasing; and both men and women are becoming more aware of the various discriminations.

The women's advice for other women environmental activists includes having a personal support or mentoring system, and maintaining one's personal sense of power, especially maintaining one's personal boundaries so as not to become disempowered in the face of adversity. The women also mentioned the importance of taking a human-oriented approach to problems, insisting on consensus as a model, thinking holistically, and realizing that environmental issues, not personalities, are what is being discussed. They recommend being proud of being women, recognizing one's strengths and the strengths that women have, knowing oneself, and following one's intuition. Some of the women feel that a knowledge and practice of feminism is important, while others feel that holding on too tight

to feminist ideologies can be counterproductive. Being good, solid, knowledgeable workers, and teaching by example is another common piece of advice. Support from others, humor, conviction, and recreational time were listed as things that contribute to the women's ability to persist through difficult times.

VII. Conclusion

The women in this paper demonstrate the similarities and differences among women environmental activists in Montana. There were striking elements in the words of these eight women. When asked about their strengths, rather than focusing on their specific skills, the women said that they feel more effective in areas such as building bridges, working with others, and thinking holistically about environmental problems. Additionally, rather than viewing power in the traditional terms of money and status, the women become empowered, partly in response to gender and other discrimination, by more personal avenues. These avenues include appreciation and support from others, and reflection on personal successes to gain the courage to go forward. They also feel empowered and fulfilled from their relationships with others: experiencing the synergy and success of a group, and helping and watching others succeed and grow.

Indeed, the women all feel that relationships are extremely important to them. In general, their relationships with women are supportive. Their relationships outside of work are also important, and give each woman an extra degree of support and encouragement in her work. Relationships with men vary -- many are supportive, but others are difficult to the point of causing the women to leave an organization. Furthermore, when the woman's personal political process and approaches to environmental problems agree with that of the organization, she seems to experience greater job satisfaction, because she is not constantly battling her personal style of approaching problems.

Although the women feel that conditions are improving, they demonstrate that sexism and other forms of discrimination are alive and well in the environmental arena. This discrimination exists in many areas in which the women do their work -- within environmental organizations, in the political arena, in state agencies, and in universities. And the "old boys club" is a force to contend with in Montana. Rather than holding the illusion that women will only encounter progressive, egalitarian people in environmental work, women activists need to be aware of the existence of this discrimination, and be prepared to deal with it however they feel is best.

Each woman, based on her individual experiences, has ideas of the problems that the environmental movement faces, how the movement could be more effective, and the role that women can play in these improvements. The women generally feel that there is too much infighting between environmental groups, and too much polarity and insularity from other social interests. In fact, infighting was mentioned alongside population growth and water quality as one of the most pressing environmental problems that we face.

The women feel that environmental activists need to put their egos aside, sit down, and build consensus and coalitions with each other to address environmental problems. They also feel that the environmentalists need to form alliances and partnerships with other social causes such as human rights groups, and even with traditional "enemies" such as farmers and ranchers. They feel that these alliances would increase the effectiveness of all participants in counteracting the real foes which they feel include the Wise Use movement and some large corporations. Most of the women said that, if they were in charge, they would handle environmental problems more cooperatively, and that women tend to approach problems this way --

building consensus and not letting their egos get in the way. Sharing power, something that men in positions of power traditionally have not done, was noted as an important step in solving the problems within the environmental movement. Note that the women stressed cooperation, not compromise.

My recommendation to those in the environmental movement is to listen to what women have to say about the organizations for which they work, about the reality of what women environmental activists face in terms of discrimination, and how women would approach environmental problems. Perhaps if the environmental movement and activists within it listened to women and acted on their recommendations, they would see a greater measure of success for a broader range of people than is currently the case.

I also recommend recognizing from this paper that women environmental activists have different personalities, strengths, backgrounds, approaches and perspectives. Stereotypes of women environmentalists being radical feminists, or gentle, non-confrontational earth mothers, or only coming from upper-middle class backgrounds are challenged by the collection of women in this paper. My wish is that we could all hear more of these voices more often, in the press and in the history books.

Appendix A
Questionnaire

Name:

1. When and where were you born?

2. Where did you grow up (through high school)? (specify city, state; rural vs. urban)

3. Did you grow up in a 2-parent household?

4. Social class of parents or guardians?

5. With what religion were you raised? What religion do you practice now?

6. What is your educational background?

7. What is your marital status?

8. Do you have any children? If so, how many?

9. List locations and approx. lengths of time where you have lived.

10. How long have you lived in the Northern Rockies?

11. What job or activity are you currently working on?

12. In what other fields or careers (besides the environment) have you worked?

13. Please list environmental or other social change groups for which you have worked (staff or volunteer), what position you held, approximate dates, and the main issues, campaigns etc. on which you worked.

14. Has gender ever been an issue for you in your environmental work (directly or indirectly)? If yes, please summarize how. (use the back if necessary)

15. Would you be willing to be interviewed further about your experiences?

Appendix B

Interview Questions

- What was your professional path to lead you to this point (i.e., what other professions, groups etc have you worked with?).
- What do you consider to be some formative experiences from your youth or later that helped you decide to enter this field?
- Who were and are your role models? Describe why.
- In what respects have you felt effective/ineffective in your work and why? How has your effectiveness changed in your various career moves?
- What, if anything has prevented or is preventing you from working at 100%?
- What would be your ideal work situation, where you feel that you would feel completely unhampered to get things done?
- What do you do outside of work?
- What have your experiences with sexism been in your current or past jobs? -racism? -classism? How have you responded to these experiences?
- What types of action, direct or indirect, did you take against these incidents? What was the outcome?
- Did you want to climb in the ranks of the organization? Were you able to?
- Describe any especially empowering experiences you have had in your work.
- How did these experiences (positive and negative) effect your perspective,
- Describe your current and past working relationships with women in the movement (i.e., isolation, sense of community, competition, mentoring etc.). With men in the movement.

- Describe any experiences you have had working with men or women in this field that were especially negative/positive.
- How have other personal relationships in your life affected your work?
- Do you feel that you work within or against the dynamics of the environmental movement?
- What do you feel are the most pressing environmental problems in the region? country?
- If you were "in charge" (of organization, country, etc.), how would you handle the environmental problems that you feel are important?
- What do you feel are the hindrances to women in general in the environmental movement? What are the supports?
- What issues regarding sexism, classism, and racism are so pressing that they need to be addressed now, how do you propose they be addressed, and by whom?
- How do you think women can be most effective at working for the environment, creating change, etc.? What is your advice to women?
- What will the next generation of women encounter? Are things getting better or worse? Who will be their role models?
- What is your definition of leadership?
- What keeps you going when times are especially difficult?
- What is your organization's philosophy about the environment? Does it see a link between environmental destruction and human oppression?
- How are decisions made in the organization?
- How would you describe the structure of your organization (official and unofficial)?
- Does your organization have a philosophy of political process? (e.g. participatory democracy, consensus decision-making, community

empowerment). If so, are the organizations actual workings consistent with this philosophy?

- What is your personal political process?
- How do you think your organization could frame or address its issues to be more effective?
- What is most troubling about the organization of the group? What is good about it? How would you change it if you were in charge?
- Who controls the pursestrings in the group? How does that affect who held power in the group?

Notes

[1]Carolyn Merchant, "Women of the Progressive Conservation Movement: 1900-1916," Environmental Review 18 (Spring 1984): 59.

[2]Stephen Fox, The American Conservation Movement, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

[3]Karen Blair, The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Defined, 1868-1914, (New York, Holmes & Meier, 1980).

[4]Merchant, "Women of the...," p. 57.

[5]Ibid., p. 60.

[6]Mrs. L.P. Williams, Chairman Forestry Committee, "Address," General Federation of Women's Clubs; American Forestry Association, Proceedings of the American Forest Congress (Washington, DC, 1905), pp. 428-35, quoted in Merchant, "Women of the...," p. 61.

[7]Lydia Adams-Williams, "Conservation -- Women's Work," Forestry and Irrigation, 14 (June, 1908), pp. 350-351, quoted in Merchant, "Women of the...," p. 65.

[8]Merchant, "Women of the...," p. 66.

[9]Ibid., pp. 68-69.

[10]Ibid., p. 62.

[11]Marsden Manson to B.W. Woodruff, April 6, 1910, Manson correspondence, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Manson "Names and Addresses of People objecting to use of Hetch Hetchy;"ms., n.d., quoted in Merchant, "Women of the...," p. 63.

[12]Merchant, "Women of the...," p. 79.

[13]Sally Ann Gumaer Ranney, "Heroines and Hierarchy: Female Leadership in the Conservation Movement" in Voices from the Environmental Movement, edited by Donald Snow. (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1992), p. 122.

[14]Ibid., pp. 122-123.

[15]However, I do feel that it would be fascinating to build on the work that I have done here, with research on men's views of female involvement in environmental activism.

[16]Interview with Christine Kaufmann, Montana Human Rights Network, Helena, Montana, 25 January 1994.

[17]The issue of women's skill development will be addressed in greater depth in Chapter V.

[18]The issue of sexism within the environmental movement will be addressed in greater length in Chapter V.

[19]Interview with Christine Kaufmann, Montana Human Rights Network, Helena, Montana, 1 July 1994.

[20]Interview with Doris Milner, Hamilton, Montana, 10 February 1994.

[21]The Bolle Report was commissioned in response to the Bitterroot crisis on the National Forest in the Bitterroot Valley of Montana. Arnold Bolle was Dean of the University of Montana School of Forestry at the time, and was commissioned to write the report. The study consisted of non-agency scientists.

[22]Lee Metcalf and Mike Mansfield were Montana senators who both had excellent environmental records. Metcalf was instrumental the designation of Wilderness areas in Montana. G.M. Brandborg was Supervisor of the Bitterroot National Forest. His environmentalism was unique among Forest Supervisors.

[23]The Wilderness Bill, passed in 1964 after a decade of congressional debate, enables congress to set aside roadless lands that will be preserved as wild lands, with no roads, motorized vehicles, logging, or mining allowed.

[24]There are two schools of thought within the wilderness movement today. Some people feel that it is best to take an incremental approach to

preserving Wilderness. Others feel that it should be designated all at once, to prevent any further encroachments on roadless lands. These and other differences of opinion have pitted wilderness group against wilderness group.

[25]Interview with Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, Helena, Montana, 25 January 1994.

[26]Interview with Janet Henderson, Missoula, Montana, 24 January 1994.

[27]Interview with Joan Bird, Helena, Montana, 2 February 1994.

[28]Interview with Joanne Big Crane, Missoula, Montana 13 August 1994.

[29]Interview with Louisa Willcox, Bozeman, Montana 28 January 1994.

[30]Interview with Teresa Erickson, Billings, Montana 1 February 1994.

[31]The Plains Truth, Newsletter of Northern Plains Resource Council, Billings, Montana, March/April 1994.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Interview with Teresa Erickson, Northern Plains Resource Council, Billings, Montana, 25 June 1994.

[36]Down To Earth, Newsletter of the Montana Environmental Information Center, Helena, Montana, May, 1994.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Interview with Christine Kaufmann, Montana Human Rights Network, Helena, Montana, 1 July 1994.

[39]The Montana Nature Conservancy Newsletter, Newsletter of The Montana Nature Conservancy, Helena, Montana, Fall, 1994.

[40]Interview with Joanne Big Crane, Ravalli, Montana, 15 August 1994.

[41]Interview with Joan Bird, Helena, Montana, 5 July 1994.

[42]Interview with Janet Ellis, 25 January 1994.

[43]Montana Audubon News, Newsletter of the Montana Audubon Council, Helena, Montana, Spring 1993.

[44]Interview with Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, Helena, Montana, 30 June 1994.

[45]Letter Be Wild, Newsletter of the Montana Wilderness Association, Helena, Montana, November 1993.

[46]Interview with John Gatchell, Montana Wilderness Association, Helena, Montana, 6 June 1994.

[47]Interview with Doris Milner, Hamilton, Montana 1 July 1994.

[48]Currents, Newsletter of the Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Coalition, Missoula, Montana, 1986-1994.

[49]Currents, July/August 1994.

[50]Interview with Janet Henderson, 24 January 1994

[51]Greater Yellowstone Report, Newsletter of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Bozeman, Montana, Fall 1994.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Interview with Louisa Willcox, 28 January 1994

[54]Interview with Christine Kaufmann, 25 January 1994.

[55]Interview with Doris Milner, 1 July 1994.10 February.

[56]Interview with Janet Ellis, 25 January 1994.

[57]Interview with Janet Henderson, 24 January 1994.

[58]Interview with Joan Bird, 2 February 1994.

[59]Interview with Teresa Erickson, 1 February 1994.

[60]Interview with Louisa Willcox, 28 January, 1994.

[61]Interview with Joanne Big Crane, 13 August 1994.

[62]Interview with Christine Kaufmann, 25 January 1994.

[63]Interview with Doris Milner, 10 February 1994.

[64]Interview with Janet Ellis, 25 January 1994.

[65]Interview with Janet Henderson, 24 January 1994.

[66]Interview with Louisa Willcox, 28 January 1994.

[67]Interview with Joanne Big Crane 13 August 1994.

[68]Interview with Teresa Erickson 1 February 1994.

[69]Interview with Joan Bird, 2 February 1994.

[70]Interview with Janet Ellis, 25 January 1994.

[71]Interview with Joan Bird, 2 February 1994

[72]Interview with Louisa Willcox, 28 January 1994.

[73]Interview with Teresa Erickson, 1 February 1994.

[74]Interview with Janet Henderson, 24 January 1994.

[75]Interview with Christine Kaufmann, 25 January 1994.

[76]Interview with Doris Milner, 10 February 1994.

[77]Interview with Joanne Big Crane, 13 August 1994.

[78]Interview with Christine Kaufmann, 1 July 1994.

[79]Interview with Doris Milner 1 July 1994.

[80]Interview with Janet Ellis, 30 June 1994.

[81]Interview with Janet Henderson 24 January 1994.

[82]Interview with Joan Bird, 5 July 1994.

[83]Interview with Joanne Big Crane, 13 August 1994.

[84]Interview with Teresa Erickson, 1 February 1994.

[85]Interview with Doris Milner, 1 July 1994.

[86]Interview with Janet Ellis, 30 June 1994.

[87]Interview with Janet Henderson, 24 January 1994.

[88]Interview with Joan Bird, 5 July 1994.

[89]Interview with Louisa Willcox, 28 January 1994.

[90]Interview with Teresa Erickson, 28 June, 1994.

[91]Interview with Joanne Big Crane, 13 August 1994.

[92]Interview with Christine Kaufmann, 1 July 1994.

[93]Interview with Janet Ellis, 30 June 1994.

[94]Interview with Janet Henderson, 24 January 1994.

[95]Interview with Joan Bird, 5 July 1994.

[96]Interview with Louisa Willcox, 28 January 1994.

[97]Interview with Teresa Erickson, 28 June 1994.

[98]Interview with Joanne Big Crane, 15 August 1994.

[99]Interview with Christine Kaufmann, 1 July 1994.

[100]Interview with Doris Milner, 10 February 1994.

[101]Interview with Christine Kaufmann, 25 January 1994.

[102]Interview with Janet Henderson, 24 January 1994.

[103]Interview with Joanne Big Crane, 13 August 1994.

[104]Interview with Christine Kaufmann, 25 January 1994.

[105]Interview with Doris Milner, 10 February 1994.

[106]Interview with Janet Henderson, 24 January 1994.

[107]Interview with Joan Bird, 2 February 1994.

[108]Interview with Louisa Willcox, 28 January 1994.

[109]Interview with Teresa Erickson, 1 February 1994.

[110]Interview with Joanne Big Crane, 13 August 1994.

[111]Interview with Christine Kaufmann, 1 July 1994.

[112]Interview with Doris Milner, 10 February 1994.

[113]Interview with Janet Ellis, 25 January 1994.

[114]Interview with Janet Henderson, 24 January 1994.

[115]Interview with Joan Bird, 2 February 1994.

[116]Interview with Christine Kaufmann, 25 January 1994.

[117]Interview with Doris Milner, 10 February 1994.

[118]Interview with Janet Ellis, 25 January 1994.

[119]Interview with Teresa Erickson, 28 June 1994.

[120]Interview with Doris Milner, 1 July 1994.

[121]Interview with Janet Ellis, 30 June 1994.

[122]Interview with Joan Bird, 5 July 1994.

[123]Interview with Christine Kaufmann, 1 July 1994.

[124]Interview with Teresa Erickson, 28 June 1994.

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